ASTRAL EDITION

THE WRITINGS

OF

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

The Publishers guarantee that this edition is limited to twelve copies.

GEBBIE AND COMPANY

President

Vice-President

Attested:

Secretary

C. R. GRANT

"That is a dangerous doctrine, I think."

Page 192.

"That is a dangerous doctrine, I think."

VOLUME II Page 192.

PHINEAS FINN

The Irish Member

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME II.

PHILADELPHIA
GEBBIE AND COMPANY
1901

Copyright, 1893, 1900
By Dodd, Mead and Company

All rights reserved

University Press · John Wilson
and Son · Cambridge, U.S.A.

PR
5680
F00
v.5

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	"The First Speech."	1
II.	Phineas Discussed	16
III.	The Second Reading is Carried	28
IV.	A Cabinet Meeting	40
V.	Mr. Kennedy's Luck	52
VI.	Finn for Loughton	64
VII.	Lady Laura Kennedy's Headache	79
VIII.	Mr. Slide's Grievance	98
IX.	Was He Honest?	110
X.	Mr. Monk upon Reform	119
XI.	Phineas Finn makes Progress	134
XII.	A Rough Encounter	146
XIII.	The Duel	158
XIV.	Lady Laura is Told	169
XV.	Madame Max Goesler	184
XVI.	Lord Fawn	196
XVII.	Lady Baldock does not send a Card to Phineas Finn	204
XVIII.	Promotion	212
XIX.	Phineas and his Friends	220
XX.	Miss Effingham's Four Lovers	237
XXI.	The Mousetrap	245

939675

CHAPTER PAGE
XXII. Mr. Mildmay's Bill 252
XXIII. "The Duke." 264
XXIV. The Duellists Meet 276
XXV. Again Successful 288
XXVI. Troubles at Loughlinter 300

Illustrations

PHOTOGRAVURES

"That is a dangerous doctrine, I think" . . *Frontispiece*
C. R. Grant.

"It was not much amiss" 14
R. B. Morrison.

"Have you not a word to say to me?" 117
Bernard Gutmann.

"Well, old fellow" 277
E. J. Read.

PHINEAS FINN, THE IRISH MEMBER.

CHAPTER I.

"THE FIRST SPEECH."

On the following morning, which was Saturday, Phineas was early at the police-office at Westminster looking after the interests of his landlord; but there had been a considerable number of men taken up during the row, and our friend could hardly procure that attention for Mr. Bunce's case to which he thought the decency of his client and his own position as a member of Parliament were entitled. The men who had been taken up were taken in batches before the magistrates; but as the soldiers in the park had been maltreated, and a considerable injury had been done in the neighbourhood of Downing Street, there was a good deal of strong feeling against the mob, and the magistrates were disposed to be severe. If decent men chose to go out among such companions, and thereby get into trouble, decent men must take the consequences. During the Saturday and Sunday a very strong feeling grew up against Mr. Turnbull. The story of the carriage was told, and he was declared

to be a turbulent demagogue, only desirous of getting popularity. And together with this feeling there arose a general verdict of "Serve them right" against all who had come into contact with the police in the great Turnbull row; and thus it came to pass that Mr. Bunce had not been liberated up to the Monday morning. On the Sunday Mrs. Bunce was in hysterics, and declared her conviction that Mr. Bunce would be imprisoned for life. Poor Phineas had an unquiet time with her on the morning of that day. In every ecstasy of her grief she threw herself into his arms, either metaphorically or materially, according to the excess of her agony at the moment, and expressed repeatedly an assured conviction that all her children would die of starvation, and that she herself would be picked up under the arches of one of the bridges. Phineas, who was soft-hearted, did what he could to comfort her, and allowed himself to be worked up to strong parliamentary anger against the magistrates and police. "When they think that they have public opinion on their side, there is nothing in the way of arbitrary excess which is too great for them." This he said to Barrington Erle, who angered him and increased the warmth of his feeling by declaring that a little close confinement would be good for the Bunces of the day. "If we don't keep the mob down, the mob will keep us down," said the whig private secretary. Phineas had no opportunity of answering this, but declared to himself that Barrington Erle was no more a liberal at heart than was Mr. Daubeny. "He was born on that side of the question, and has been receiving whig wages all his life. That is the history of his politics!"

On the Sunday afternoon Phineas went to Lord

Brentford's in Portman Square, intending to say a word or two about Lord Chiltern, and meaning also to induce, if possible, the Cabinet Minister to take part with him against the magistrates,—having a hope also, in which he was not disappointed, that he might find Lady Laura Kennedy with her father. He had come to understand that Lady Laura was not to be visited at her own house on Sundays. So much indeed she had told him in so many words. But he had come to understand also, without any plain telling, that she rebelled in heart against this Sabbath tyranny,—and that she would escape from it when escape was possible. She had now come to talk to her father about her brother, and had brought Violet Effingham with her. They had walked together across the park after church, and intended to walk back again. Mr. Kennedy did not like to have any carriage out on a Sunday, and to this arrangement his wife made no objection.

Phineas had received a letter from the Stamford surgeon, and was able to report favourably of Lord Chiltern. "The man says that he had better not be moved for a month," said Phineas. "But that means nothing. They always say that."

"Will it not be best for him to remain where he is?" said the Earl.

"He has not a soul to speak to," said Phineas.

"I wish I were with him," said his sister.

"That is, of course, out of the question," said the Earl. "They know him at that inn, and it really seems to me best that he should stay there. I do not think he would be so much at his ease here."

"It must be dreadful for a man to be confined to his room without a creature near him, except the servants,"

said Violet. The Earl frowned, but said nothing further. They all perceived that as soon as he had learned that there was no real danger as to his son's life, he was determined that this accident should not work him up to any show of tenderness. "I do so hope he will come up to London," continued Violet, who was not afraid of the Earl, and was determined not to be put down.

"You don't know what you are talking about, my dear," said Lord Brentford.

After this Phineas found it very difficult to extract any sympathy from the Earl on behalf of the men who had been locked up. He was moody and cross, and could not be induced to talk on the great subject of the day. Violet Effingham declared that she did not care how many Bunces were locked up; nor for how long,—adding, however, a wish that Mr. Turnbull himself had been among the number of the prisoners. Lady Laura was somewhat softer than this, and consented to express pity in the case of Mr. Bunce himself; but Phineas perceived that the pity was awarded to him and not to the sufferer. The feeling against Mr. Turnbull was at the present moment so strong mong all the upper classes, that Mr. Bunce and his brethren might have been kept in durance for a week without commiseration from them.

"It is very hard certainly on a man like Mr. Bunce," said Lady Laura.

"Why did not Mr. Bunce stay at home and mind his business?" said the Earl.

Phineas spent the remainder of that day alone, and came to a resolution that on the coming occasion he certainly would speak in the House. The debate would

be resumed on the Monday, and he would rise to his legs on the very first moment that it became possible for him to do so. And he would do nothing towards preparing a speech;—nothing whatever. On this occasion he would trust entirely to such words as might come to him at the moment;—ay, and to such thoughts. He had before burdened his memory with preparations, and the very weight of the burden had been too much for his mind. He had feared to trust himself to speak, because he had felt that he was not capable of performing the double labour of saying his lesson by heart, and of facing the House for the first time. There should be nothing now for him to remember. His thoughts were full of his subject. He would support Mr. Mildmay's bill with all his eloquence, but he would implore Mr. Mildmay, and the Home Secretary, and the Government generally, to abstain from animosity against the populace of London, because they desired one special boon which Mr. Mildmay did not think that it was his duty to give them. He hoped that ideas and words would come to him. Ideas and words had been free enough with him in the old days of the Dublin debating society. If they failed him now, he must give the thing up, and go back to Mr. Low.

On the Monday morning Phineas was for two hours at the police-court in Westminster, and at about one on that day Mr. Bunce was liberated. When he was brought up before the magistrate, Mr. Bunce spoke his mind very freely as to the usage he had received, and declared his intention of bringing an action against the sergeant who had detained him. The magistrate, of course, took the part of the police, and declared that, from the evidence of two men who were exam-

ined, Bunce had certainly used such violence in the crowd as had justified his arrest.

"I used no violence," said Bunce.

"According to your own showing, you endeavoured to make your way up to Mr. Turnbull's carriage," said the magistrate.

"I was close to the carriage before the police even saw me," said Bunce.

"But you tried to force your way round to the door."

"I used no force till a man had me by the collar to push me back; and I was n't violent, not then. I told him I was doing what I had a right to do,—and it was that as made him hang on to me."

"You were not doing what you had a right to do. You were assisting to create a riot," said the magistrate, with that indignation which a London magistrate should always know how to affect.

Phineas, however, was allowed to give evidence as to his landlord's character, and then Bunce was liberated. But before he went he again swore that that should not be the last of it, and he told the magistrate that he had been ill-used. When liberated, he was joined by a dozen sympathising friends, who escorted him home, and among them were one or two literary gentlemen, employed on those excellent penny papers, the People's Banner and the Ballot-box. It was their intention that Mr. Bunce's case should not be allowed to sleep. One of these gentlemen made a distinct offer to Phineas Finn of unbounded popularity during life and of immortality afterwards, if he, as a member of Parliament, would take up Bunce's case with vigour. Phineas, not quite understanding the nature of the

offer, and not as yet knowing the profession of the gentleman, gave some general reply.

"You come out strong, Mr. Finn, and we 'll see that you 're properly reported. I 'm on the Banner, sir, and I 'll answer for that."

Phineas, who had been somewhat eager in expressing his sympathy with Bunce, and had not given very close attention to the gentleman who was addressing him, was still in the dark. The nature of the Banner, which the gentleman was on, did not at once come home to him.

"Something ought to be done, certainly," said Phineas.

"We shall take it up strong," said the gentleman, "and we shall be happy to have you among us. You 'll find, Mr. Finn, that in public life there 's nothing like having a horgan to back you. What is the most you can do in the 'Ouse? Nothing, if you 're not reported. You 're speaking to the country;—ain't you? And you can't do that without a horgan, Mr. Finn. You come among us on the Banner, Mr. Finn. You can't do better."

Then Phineas understood the nature of the offer made to him. As they parted, the literary gentleman gave our hero his card. "Mr. Quintus Slide." So much was printed. Then, on the corner of the card was written, "Banner Office, 137, Fetter Lane." Mr. Quintus Slide was a young man, under thirty, not remarkable for clean linen, and who always talked of the "'Ouse." But he was a well-known and not undistinguished member of a powerful class of men. He had been a reporter, and as such knew the "'Ouse" well, and was a writer for the press. And, though he talked

of "'Ouses" and "horgans," he wrote good English with great rapidity, and was possessed of that special sort of political fervour which shows itself in a man's work rather than in his conduct. It was Mr. Slide's taste to be an advanced reformer, and in all his operations on behalf of the People's Banner he was a reformer very much advanced. No man could do an article on the people's indefeasible rights with more pronounced vigour than Mr. Slide. But it had never occurred to him as yet that he ought to care for anything else than the fight,—than the advantage of having a good subject on which to write slashing articles. Mr. Slide was an energetic but not a thoughtful man; but on his thoughts on politics, as far as they went with him, he regarded the wrongs of the people as being of infinitely greater value than their rights. It was not that he was insincere in all that he was daily saying; —but simply that he never thought about it. Very early in life he had fallen among "people's friends," and an opening on the liberal press had come in his way. To be a "people's friend" suited the turn of his ambition, and he was a "people's friend." It was his business to abuse Government, and to express on all occasions an opinion that as a matter of course the ruling powers were the "people's enemies." Had the ruling powers ceased to be the "people's enemies," Mr. Slide's ground would have been taken from under his feet. But such a catastrophe was out of the question. That excellent old arrangement that had gone on since demagogues were first invented was in full vigour. There were the ruling powers and there were the people—devils on one side and angels on the other,—and

as long as a people's friend had a pen in his hand all was right.

Phineas, when he left the indignant Bunce to go among his friends, walked to the House thinking a good deal of what Mr. Slide had said to him. The potted peas Committee was again on, and he had intended to be in the Committee Room by twelve punctually: but he had been unable to leave Mr. Bunce in the lurch, and it was now past one. Indeed, he had, from one unfortunate circumstance after another, failed hitherto in giving to the potted peas that resolute attention which the subject demanded. On the present occasion his mind was full of Mr. Quintus Slide and the People's Banner. After all, was there not something in Mr. Slide's proposition? He, Phineas, had come into Parliament as it were under the wing of a Government pack, and his friendships, which had been very successful, had been made with Ministers, and with the friends of Ministers. He had made up his mind to be whig ministerial, and to look for his profession in that line. He had been specially fortified in this resolution by his dislike to the ballot,—which dislike had been the result of Mr. Monk's teaching. Had Mr. Turnbull become his friend instead, it may well be that he would have liked the ballot. On such subjects men must think long, and be sure that they have thought in earnest, before they are justified in saying that their opinions are the results of their own thoughts. But now he began to reflect how far this ministerial profession would suit him. Would it be much to be a Lord of the Treasury, subject to the dominion of Mr. Rattler? Such lordship and such

subjection would be the result of success. He told himself that he was at heart a true liberal. Would it not be better for him to abandon the idea of office trammels, and go among them on the People's Banner? A glow of enthusiasm came over him as he thought of it. But what would Violet Effingham say to the People's Banner and Mr. Quintus Slide? And he would have liked the Banner better had not Mr. Slide talked about the 'Ouse.

From the Committee Room, in which, alas! he took no active part in reference to the potted peas, he went down to the House, and was present when the debate was resumed. Not unnaturally, one speaker after another made some allusion to the row in the streets, and the work which had fallen to the lot of the magistrates. Mr. Turnbull had declared that he would vote against the second reading of Mr. Mildmay's bill, and had explained that he would do so because he could consent to no Reform Bill which did not include the ballot as one of its measures. The debate fashioned itself after this speech of Mr. Turnbull's, and turned again very much upon the ballot,—although it had been thought that the late debate had settled that question. One or two of Mr. Turnbull's followers declared that they also would vote against the bill,—of course, as not going far enough; and one or two gentlemen from the conservative benches extended a spoken welcome to these new colleagues. Then Mr. Palliser got up and addressed the House for an hour, struggling hard to bring back the real subject, and to make the House understand that the ballot, whether good or bad, had been knocked on the head, and that members had no right at the present moment to consider anything but

the expediency or inexpediency of so much reform as Mr. Mildmay presented to them in the present bill.

Phineas was determined to speak, and to speak on this evening if he could catch the Speaker's eye. Again the scene before him was going round before him; again things became dim, and again he felt his blood beating hard at his heart. But things were not so bad with him as they had been before, because he had nothing to remember. He hardly knew, indeed, what he intended to say. He had an idea that he was desirous of joining in earnest support of the measure, with a vehement protest against the injustice which had been done to the people in general, and to Mr. Bunce in particular. He had firmly resolved that no fear of losing favour with the Government should induce him to hold his tongue as to the Buncean cruelties. Sooner than do so he would certainly "go among them" at the Banner office.

He started up, wildly, when Mr. Palliser had completed his speech; but the Speaker's eye, not unnaturally, had travelled to the other side of the House, and there was a tory of the old school upon his legs,—Mr. Western, the member for East Barsetshire, one of the gallant few who dared to vote against Sir Robert Peel's bill for repealing the Corn Laws in 1846. Mr. Western spoke with a slow, ponderous, unimpressive, but very audible voice, for some twenty minutes, disdaining to make reference to Mr. Turnbull and his politics, but pleading against any reform, with all the old arguments. Phineas did not hear a word that he said;—did not attempt to hear. He was keen in his resolution to make another attempt at the Speaker's eye, and at the present moment was thinking of that, and of that

only. He did not even give himself a moment's reflection as to what his own speech should be. He would dash at it and take his chance, resolved that at least he would not fail in courage. Twice he was on his legs before Mr. Western had finished his slow harangue, and twice he was compelled to reseat himself, —thinking that he had subjected himself to ridicule. At last the member for East Barset sat down, and Phineas was conscious that he had lost a moment or two in presenting himself again to the Speaker.

He held his ground, however, though he saw that he had various rivals for the right of speech. He held his ground, and was instantly aware that he had gained his point. There was a slight pause, and as some other urgent member did not reseat himself, Phineas heard the president of that august assembly call upon himself to address the House. The thing was now to be done. There he was with the House of Commons at his feet,—a crowded House, bound to be his auditors as long as he should think fit to address them, and reporters by tens and twenties in the gallery ready and eager to let the country know what the young member for Loughshane would say in this his maiden speech.

Phineas Finn had sundry gifts: a powerful and pleasant voice, which he had learned to modulate, a handsome presence, and a certain natural mixture of modesty and self-reliance, which would certainly protect him from the faults of arrogance and pomposity, and which, perhaps, might carry him through the perils of his new position. And he had also the great advantage of friends in the House who were anxious that he should do well. But he had not that gift of slow blood which on the former occasion would have en-

abled him to remember his prepared speech, and which would now have placed all his own resources within his own reach. He began with the expression of an opinion that every true reformer ought to accept Mr. Mildmay's bill, even if it were accepted only as an instalment,—but before he had got through these sentences, he became painfully conscious that he was repeating his own words.

He was cheered almost from the outset, and yet he knew as he went on that he was failing. He had certain arguments at his fingers' ends,—points with which he was, in truth, so familiar that he need hardly have troubled himself to arrange them for special use,—and he forgot even these. He found that he was going on with one platitude after another as to the benefit of reform, in a manner that would have shamed him six or seven years ago at a debating club. He pressed on, fearing that words would fail him altogether if he paused;—but he did in truth speak very much too fast, knocking his words together so that no reporter could properly catch them. But he had nothing to say for the bill except what hundreds had said before, and hundreds would say again. Still he was cheered, and still he went on; and as he became more and more conscious of his failure there grew upon him the idea, —the dangerous hope, that he might still save himself from ignominy by the eloquence of his invective against the police.

He tried it, and succeeded thoroughly in making the House understand that he was very angry,—but he succeeded in nothing else. He could not catch the words to express the thoughts of his mind. He could not explain his idea that the people out of the House

had as much right to express their opinion in favour of the ballot as members in the House had to express theirs against it; and that animosity had been shown to the people by the authorities because they had so expressed their opinion. Then he attempted to tell the story of Mr. Bunce in a light and airy way, failed, and sat down in the middle of it. Again he was cheered by all around him,—cheered as a new member is usually cheered,—and in the midst of the cheer would have blown out his brains had there been a pistol there ready for such an operation.

That hour with him was very bad. He did not know how to get up and go away, or how to keep his place. For some time he sat with his hat off, forgetful of his privilege of wearing it; and then put it on hurriedly, as though the fact of his not wearing it must have been observed by everybody. At last, at about two, the debate was adjourned, and then as he was slowly leaving the House, thinking how he might creep away without companionship, Mr. Monk took him by the arm.

"Are you going to walk?" said Mr. Monk.

"Yes," said Phineas; "I shall walk."

"Then we may go together as far as Pall Mall. Come along." Phineas had no means of escape, and left the House hanging on Mr. Monk's arm, without a word. Nor did Mr. Monk speak till they were out in Palace Yard. "It was not much amiss," said Mr. Monk, "but you 'll do better than that yet."

"Mr. Monk," said Phineas, "I have made an ass of myself so thoroughly, that there will at any rate be this good result, that I shall never make an ass of myself again after the same fashion."

"It was not much amiss."

"Ah!—I thought you had some such feeling as that, and therefore I was determined to speak to you. You may be sure, Finn, that I do not care to flatter you, and I think you ought to know that, as far as I am able, I will tell you the truth. Your speech, which was certainly nothing great, was about on a par with other maiden speeches in the House of Commons. You have done yourself neither good nor harm. Nor was it desirable that you should. My advice to you now is never to avoid speaking on any subject that interests you, but never to speak for above three minutes till you find yourself as much at home on your legs as you are when sitting. But do not suppose that you have made an ass of yourself,—that is, in any special degree. Now, good night."

CHAPTER II.

PHINEAS DISCUSSED.

Lady Laura Kennedy heard two accounts of her friend's speech,—and both from men who had been present. Her husband was in his place, in accordance with his constant practice, and Lord Brentford had been seated, perhaps unfortunately, in the peers' gallery.

"And you think it was a failure?" Lady Laura said to her husband.

"It certainly was not a success. There was nothing particular about it. There was a good deal of it you could hardly hear."

After that she got the morning newspapers, and turned with great interest to the report. Phineas Finn had been, as it were, adopted by her as her own political offspring,—or at any rate as her political godchild. She had made promises on his behalf to various personages of high political standing,—to her father, to Mr. Monk, to the Duke of St. Bungay, and even to Mr. Mildmay himself. She had thoroughly intended that Phineas Finn should be a political success from the first; and since her marriage, she had, I think, been more intent upon it than before. Perhaps there was a feeling on her part that having wronged him in one way, she would repay him in another. She had become so eager for his success,—for a while scorning to conceal her feeling,—that her husband had uncon-

sciously begun to entertain a dislike to her eagerness. We know how quickly women arrive at an understanding of the feelings of those with whom they live; and now, on that very occasion, Lady Laura perceived that her husband did not take in good part her anxiety on behalf of her friend. She saw that it was so as she turned over the newspaper looking for the report of the speech. It was given in six lines, and at the end of it there was an intimation,—expressed in the shape of advice,—that the young orator had better speak more slowly if he wished to be efficacious either with the House or with the country.

"He seems to have been cheered a good deal," said Lady Laura.

"All members are cheered at their first speech," said Mr. Kennedy.

"I 've no doubt he 'll do well yet," said Lady Laura.

"Very likely," said Mr. Kennedy. Then he turned to his newspaper, and did not take his eyes off it as long as his wife remained with him.

Later in the day Lady Laura saw her father, and Miss Effingham was with her at the time. Lord Brentford said something which indicated that he had heard the debate on the previous evening, and Lady Laura instantly began to ask him about Phineas.

"The less said the better," was the Earl's reply.

"Do you mean that it was so bad as that?" asked Lady Laura.

"It was not very bad at first;—though indeed nobody could say it was very good. But he got himself into a mess about the police and the magistrates before he had done, and nothing but the kindly feeling always shown to a first effort saved him from being coughed

down." Lady Laura had not a word more to say about Phineas to her father; but, womanlike, she resolved that she would not abandon him. How many first failures in the world had been the precursors of ultimate success! "Mildmay will lose his bill," said the Earl, sorrowfully. "There does not seem to be a doubt about that."

"And what will you all do?" asked Lady Laura.

"We must go to the country, I suppose," said the Earl.

"What 's the use? You can't have a more liberal House than you have now," said Lady Laura.

"We may have one less liberal,—or rather less radical,—with fewer men to support Mr. Turnbull. I do not see what else we can do. They say that there are no less than twenty-seven men on our side of the House who will either vote with Turnbull against us, or will decline to vote at all."

"Every one of them ought to lose his seat," said Lady Laura.

"But what can we do? How is the Queen's Government to be carried on?" We all know the sad earnestness which impressed itself on the Earl's brow as he asked these momentous questions. "I don't suppose that Mr. Turnbull can form a ministry."

"With Mr. Daubeny as whipper-in, perhaps he might," said Lady Laura.

"And will Mr. Finn lose his seat?" asked Violet Effingham.

"Most probably," said the Earl. "He only got it by an accident."

"You must find him a seat somewhere in England," said Violet.

"That might be difficult," said the Earl, who then left the room.

The two women remained together for some quarter of an hour before they spoke again. Then Lady Laura said something about her brother. "If there be a dissolution, I hope Oswald will stand for Loughton." Loughton was a borough close to Saulsby, in which, as regarded its political interests, Lord Brentford was supposed to have considerable influence. To this Violet said nothing. "It is quite time," continued Lady Laura, "that old Mr. Standish should give way. He has had the seat for twenty-five years, and has never done anything, and he seldom goes to the House now."

"He is not your uncle, is he?"

"No; he is papa's cousin; but he is ever so much older than papa;—nearly eighty, I believe."

"Would not that be just the place for Mr. Finn?" said Violet.

Then Lady Laura became very serious. "Oswald would of course have a better right to it than anybody else."

"But would Lord Chiltern go into Parliament? I have heard him declare that he would not."

"If we could get papa to ask him, I think he would change his mind," said Lady Laura.

There was again silence for a few moments, after which Violet returned to the original subject of their conversation. "It would be a thousand pities that Mr. Finn should be turned out into the cold. Don't you think so?"

"I, for one, should be very sorry."

"So should I,—and the more so from what Lord Brentford says about his not speaking well last night.

I don't think that it is very much of an accomplishment for a gentleman to speak well. Mr. Turnbull, I suppose, speaks well; and they say that that horrid man, Mr. Bonteen, can talk by the hour together. I don't think that it shows a man to be clever at all. But I believe Mr. Finn would do it, if he set his mind to it, and I shall think it a great shame if they turn him out."

"It would depend very much, I suppose, on Lord Tulla."

"I don't know anything about Lord Tulla," said Violet; "but I 'm quite sure that he might have Loughton, if we manage it properly. Of course Lord Chiltern should have it if he wants it, but I don't think he will stand in Mr. Finn's way."

"I 'm afraid it 's out of the question," said Lady Laura, gravely. "Papa thinks so much about the borough. The reader will remember that both Lord Brentford and his daughter were thorough reformers! The use of a little borough of his own, however, is a convenience to a great peer.

"Those difficult things have always to be talked of for a long while, and then they become easy," said Violet. "I believe if you were to propose to Mr. Kennedy to give all his property to the church missionaries and emigrate to New Zealand, he 'd begin to consider it seriously after a time."

"I shall not try, at any rate."

"Because you don't want to go to New Zealand;—but you might try about Loughton for poor Mr. Finn."

"Violet," said Lady Laura, after a moment's pause;—and she spoke sharply; "Violet, I believe you are in love with Mr. Finn."

"That 's just like you, Laura."

"I never made such an accusation against you before, or against anybody else that I can remember. But I do begin to believe that you are in love with Mr. Finn."

"Why should n't I be in love with him, if I like?"

"I say nothing about that;—only he has not got a penny."

"But I have, my dear."

"And I doubt whether you have any reason for supposing that he is in love with you."

"That would be my affair, my dear."

"Then you are in love with him?"

"That is my affair also."

Lady Laura shrugged her shoulders. "Of course it is; and if you tell me to hold my tongue, of course I will do so. If you ask me whether I think it a good match, of course I must say I do not."

"I don't tell you to hold your tongue, and I don't ask you what you think about the match. You are quite welcome to talk as much about me as you please;—but as to Mr. Phineas Finn, you have no business to think anything."

"I should n't talk to anybody but yourself."

"I am growing to be quite indifferent as to what people say. Lady Baldock asked me the other day whether I was going to throw myself away on Mr. Laurence Fitzgibbon."

"No!"

"Indeed she did."

"And what did you answer?"

"I told her that it was not quite settled; but that as I had only spoken to him once during the last two years, and then for not more than half a minute, and

as I was n't sure whether I knew him by sight, and as I had reason to suppose he did n't know my name, there might, perhaps, be a delay of a week or two before the thing came off. Then she flounced out of the room."

"But what made her ask about Mr. Fitzgibbon?"

"Somebody had been hoaxing her. I am beginning to think that Augusta does it for her private amusement. If so, I shall think more highly of my dear cousin than I have hitherto done. But, Laura, as you have made a similar accusation against me, and as I cannot get out of it with you as I do with my aunt, I must ask you to hear my protestation. I am not in love with Mr. Phineas Finn. Heaven help me;—as far as I can tell, I am not in love with any one, and never shall be." Lady Laura looked pleased. "Do you know," continued Violet, "that I think I could be in love with Mr. Phineas Finn, if I could be in love with anybody?" Then Lady Laura looked displeased. "In the first place he is a gentleman," continued Violet. "Then he is a man of spirit. And then he has not too much spirit;—not that kind of spirit which makes some men think that they are the finest things going. His manners are perfect;—not Chesterfieldian, and yet never offensive. He never browbeats any one, and never toadies any one. He knows how to live easily with men of all ranks, without any appearance of claiming a special status for himself. If he were made Archbishop of Canterbury to-morrow, I believe he would settle down into the place of the first subject in the land without arrogance, and without false shame."

"You are his eulogist with a vengeance."

"I am his eulogist; but I am not in love with him.

If he were to ask me to be his wife to-morrow, I should be distressed, and should refuse him. If he were to marry my dearest friend in the world, I should tell him to kiss me and be my brother. As to Mr. Phineas Finn,—those are my sentiments."

"What you say is very odd."

"Why odd?"

"Simply because mine are the same."

"Are they the same? I once thought, Laura, that you did love him;—that you meant to be his wife."

Lady Laura sat for a while without making any reply to this. She sat with her elbow on the table and with her face leaning on her hand,—thinking how far it would tend to her comfort if she spoke in true confidence. Violet during the time never took her eyes from her friend's face, but remained silent as though waiting for an answer. She had been very explicit as to her feelings. Would Laura Kennedy be equally explicit? She was too clever to forget that such plainness of speech would be, must be more difficult to Lady Laura than to herself. Lady Laura was a married woman; but she felt that her friend would have been wrong to search for secrets, unless she were ready to tell her own. It was probably some such feeling which made Lady Laura speak at last.

"So I did, nearly——" said Lady Laura; "very nearly. You told me just now that you had money, and could therefore do as you pleased. I had no money and could not do as I pleased."

"And you told me also that I had no reason for thinking that he cared for me."

"Did I? Well;—I suppose you have no reason. He did care for me. He did love me."

"He told you so?"

"Yes;—he told me so."

"And how did you answer him?"

"I had that very morning become engaged to Mr. Kennedy. That was my answer."

"And what did he say when you told him?"

"I do not know. I cannot remember. But he behaved very well."

"And now,—if he were to love me, you would grudge me his love?"

"Not for that reason,—not if I know myself. Oh no! I would not be so selfish as that."

"For what reason then?"

"Because I look upon it as written in heaven that you are to be Oswald's wife."

"Heaven's writings, then, are false," said Violet, getting up and walking away.

In the meantime Phineas was very wretched at home. When he reached his lodgings after leaving the House, after his short conversation with Mr. Monk,—he tried to comfort himself with what that gentleman had said to him. For a while, while he was walking, there had been some comfort in Mr. Monk's words. Mr. Monk had much experience, and doubtless knew what he was saying,—and there might yet be hope. But all this hope faded away when Phineas was in his own rooms. There came upon him, as he looked round them, an idea that he had no business to be in Parliament, that he was an impostor, that he was going about the world under false pretences, and that he would never set himself aright, even unto himself, till he had gone through some terrible act of humiliation. He had been a cheat even to Mr. Quintus

Slide of the Banner, in accepting an invitation to come among them. He had been a cheat to Lady Laura, in that he had induced her to think that he was fit to live with her. He was a cheat to Violet Effingham, in assuming that he was capable of making himself agreeable to her. He was a cheat to Lord Chiltern when riding his horses, and pretending to be a proper associate for a man of fortune. Why,—what was his income? What his birth? What his proper position? And now he had got the reward which all cheats deserve. Then he went to bed, and as he lay there, he thought of Mary Flood Jones. Had he plighted his troth to Mary, and then worked like a slave under Mr. Low's auspices,—he would not have been a cheat.

It seemed to him that he had hardly been asleep when the girl came into his room in the morning. "Sir," said she, "there 's that gentleman there."

"What gentleman?"

"The old gentleman."

Then Phineas knew that Mr. Clarkson was in his sitting-room, and that he would not leave it till he had seen the owner of the room. Nay,—Phineas was pretty sure that Mr. Clarkson would come into the bedroom, if he were kept long waiting. "D—— the old gentleman," said Phineas in his wrath;—and the maid-servant heard him say so.

In about twenty minutes he went out into the sitting-room, with his slippers on and in his dressing-gown. Suffering under the circumstances of such an emergency, how is any man to go through the work of dressing and washing with proper exactness? As to the prayers which he said on that morning, I think that no question should be asked. He came out with a

black cloud on his brow, and with his mind half made up to kick Mr. Clarkson out of the room. Mr. Clarkson, when he saw him, moved his chin round within his white cravat, as was a custom with him, and put his thumb and forefinger on his lips, and then shook his head.

"Very bad, Mr. Finn; very bad indeed; very bad, ain't it?"

"You coming here in this way at all times in the day is very bad," said Phineas.

"And where would you have me go? Would you like to see me down in the lobby of the House?"

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Clarkson, I don't want to see you anywhere."

"Ah; yes; I dare say! And that 's what you call honest, being a Parliament gent! You had my money, and then you tell me you don't want to see me any more!"

"I have not had your money," said Phineas.

"But let me tell you," continued Mr. Clarkson, "that I want to see you;—and shall go on seeing you till the money is paid."

"I 've not had any of your money," said Phineas.

Mr. Clarkson again twitched his chin about on the top of his cravat and smiled. "Mr. Finn," said he, showing the bill, "is that your name?"

"Yes, it is."

"Then I want my money."

"I have no money to give you."

"Do be punctual now. Why ain't you punctual? I 'd do anything for you if you were punctual. I would indeed." Mr. Clarkson, as he said this, sat down in the chair which had been placed for our hero's

breakfast, and cutting a slice off the loaf, began to butter it with great composure.

"Mr. Clarkson," said Phineas, "I cannot ask you to breakfast here. I am engaged."

"I 'll just take a bit of bread and butter all the same," said Clarkson. "Where do you get your butter? Now I could tell you a woman who 'd give it you cheaper and a deal better than this. This is all lard. Shall I send her to you?"

"No," said Phineas. There was no tea ready, and therefore Mr. Clarkson emptied the milk into a cup and drank it. "After this," said Phineas, "I must beg, Mr. Clarkson, that you will never come to my room any more. I shall not be at home to you."

"The lobby of the House is the same thing to me," said Mr. Clarkson. "They know me there well. I wish you 'd be punctual, and then we 'd be the best of friends." After that Mr. Clarkson, having finished his bread and butter, took his leave.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND READING IS CARRIED.

The debate on the bill was prolonged during the whole of that week. Lord Brentford, who loved his seat in the Cabinet and the glory of being a Minister, better even than he loved his borough, had taken a gloomy estimate when he spoke of twenty-seven defaulters, and of the bill as certainly lost. Men who were better able than he to make estimates,—the Bonteens and Fitzgibbons on each side of the House, and above all the Rattlers and Robys, produced lists from day to day which varied now by three names in one direction, then by two in another, and which fluctuated at last by units only. They all concurred in declaring that it would be a very near division. A great effort was made to close the debate on the Friday, but it failed, and the full tide of speech was carried on till the following Monday. On that morning Phineas heard Mr. Rattler declare at the club that, as far as his judgment went, the division at that moment was a fair subject for a bet. "There are two men doubtful in the House," said Rattler, "and if one votes on one side and one on the other, or if neither votes at all, it will be a tie." Mr. Roby, however, the whip on the other side, was quite sure that one at least of these gentlemen would go into his lobby, and that the other would not go into Mr. Rattler's lobby. I am inclined to think that the town was generally inclined to put more con-

fidence in the accuracy of Mr. Roby than in that of Mr. Rattler; and among betting men there certainly was a point given by those who backed the conservatives. The odds, however, were lost, for on the division the numbers in the two lobbies were equal, and the Speaker gave his casting vote in favour of the Government. The bill was read a second time, and was lost, as a matter of course, in reference to any subsequent action. Mr. Roby declared that even Mr. Mildmay could not go on with nothing but the Speaker's vote to support him. Mr. Mildmay had no doubt felt that he could not go on with his bill from the moment in which Mr. Turnbull had declared his opposition; but he could not with propriety withdraw it in deference to Mr. Turnbull's opinion.

During the week Phineas had had his hands sufficiently full. Twice he had gone to the potted peas inquiry; but he had been at the office of the People's Banner more often than that. Bunce had been very resolute in his determination to bring an action against the police for false imprisonment, even though he spent every shilling of his savings in doing so. And when his wife, in the presence of Phineas, begged that bygones might be bygones, reminding him that spilt milk could not be recovered, he called her a mean-spirited woman. Then Mrs. Bunce wept a flood of tears, and told her favourite lodger that for her all comfort in this world was over. "Drat the reformers, I say. And I wish there was no Parliament; so I do. What 's the use of all the voting, when it means nothing but dry bread and cross words?" Phineas by no means encouraged his landlord in his litigious spirit, advising him rather to keep his money in his pocket,

and leave the fighting of the battle to the columns of the Banner,—which would fight it, at any rate, with economy. But Bunce, though he delighted in the Banner, and showed an unfortunate readiness to sit at the feet of Mr. Quintus Slide, would have his action at law;—in which resolution Mr. Slide did, I fear, encourage him behind the back of his better friend, Phineas Finn.

Phineas went with Bunce to Mr. Low's chambers,—for Mr. Low had in some way become acquainted with the law-stationer's journeyman,—and there some very good advice was given. "Have you asked yourself what is your object, Mr. Bunce?" said Mr. Low. Mr. Bunce declared he had asked himself that question, and had answered it. His object was redress. "In the shape of compensation to yourself," suggested Mr. Low. No; Mr. Bunce would not admit that he personally required any compensation. The redress wanted was punishment to the man. "Is it for vengeance?" asked Mr. Low. No; it was not for vengeance, Mr. Bunce declared. "It ought not to be," continued Mr. Low; "because, though you think that the man exceeded in his duty, you must feel that he was doing so through no personal ill-will to yourself."

"What I want is, to have the fellows kept in their proper places," said Mr. Bunce.

"Exactly;—and therefore these things, when they occur, are mentioned in the press and in Parliament,—and the attention of a Secretary of State is called to them. Thank God, we don't have very much of that kind of thing in England."

"Maybe we shall have more if we don't look to it," said Bunce stoutly.

"We always are looking to it," said Mr. Low;—"looking to it very carefully. But I don't think anything is to be done in that way by indictment against a single man, whose conduct has been already approved by the magistrates. If you want notoriety, Mr. Bunce, and don't mind what you pay for it; or have got anybody else to pay for it; then indeed——"

"There ain't nobody to pay for it," said Bunce, waxing angry.

"Then I certainly should not pay for it myself if I were you," said Mr. Low.

But Bunce was not to be counselled out of his intention. When he was out in the square with Phineas he expressed great anger against Mr. Low. "He don't know what patriotism means," said the law scrivener. "And then he talks to me about notoriety! It has always been the same way with 'em. If a man shows a spark of public feeling, it 's all hambition. I don't want no notoriety. I wants to earn my bread peaceable, and to be let alone when I 'm about my own business. I pays rates for the police to look after rogues, not to haul folks about and lock 'em up for days and nights, who is doing what they has a legal right to do." After that, Bunce went to his attorney, to the great detriment of the business at the stationer's shop, and Phineas visited the office of the People's Banner. There he wrote a leading article about Bunce's case, for which he was in due time to be paid a guinea. After all, the People's Banner might do more for him in this way than ever would be done by Parliament. Mr. Slide, however, and another gentleman at the Banner office, much older than Mr. Slide, who announced himself as the actual editor, were anxious that

Phineas should rid himself of his heterodox political resolutions about the ballot. It was not that they cared much about his own opinions; and when Phineas attempted to argue with the editor on the merits of the ballot, the editor put him down very shortly. "We go in for it, Mr. Finn," he said. If Mr. Finn would go in for it too, the editor seemed to think that Mr. Finn might make himself very useful at the Banner office. Phineas stoutly maintained that this was impossible,—and was therefore driven to confine his articles in the service of the people to those open subjects on which his opinions agreed with those of the People's Banner. This was his second article, and the editor seemed to think that, backward as he was about the ballot, he was too useful an aid to be thrown aside. A member of Parliament is not now all that he was once, but still there is a prestige in the letters affixed to his name which makes him loom larger in the eyes of the world than other men. Get into Parliament, if it be but for the borough of Loughshane, and the People's Banners all round will be glad of your assistance, as will also companies limited and unlimited to a very marvellous extent. Phineas wrote his article and promised to look in again, and so they went on. Mr. Quintus Slide continued to assure him that a "horgan" was indispensable to him, and Phineas began to accommodate his ears to the sound which had at first been so disagreeable. He found that his acquaintance, Mr. Slide, had ideas of his own as to getting into the 'Ouse at some future time. "I always look upon the 'Ouse as my oyster, and 'ere's my sword," said Mr. Slide, brandishing an old quill pen. "And I feel that if once there I could get along. I do indeed. What

is it a man wants? It 's only pluck,—that he should n't funk because a 'undred other men are looking at him." Then Phineas asked him whether he had any idea of a constituency, to which Mr. Slide replied that he had no absolutely formed intention. Many boroughs, however, would doubtless be set free from aristocratic influence by the redistribution of seats which must take place, as Mr. Slide declared, at any rate in the next session. Then he named the borough of Loughton; and Phineas Finn, thinking of Saulsby, thinking of the Earl, thinking of Lady Laura, and thinking of Violet, walked away disgusted. Would it not be better that the quiet town, clustering close round the walls of Saulsby, should remain as it was, than that it should be polluted by the presence of Mr. Quintus Slide?

On the last day of the debate, at a few moments before four o'clock, Phineas encountered another terrible misfortune. He had been at the potted peas since twelve, and had on this occasion targed two or three commissariat officers very tightly with questions respecting cabbages and potatoes, and had asked whether the officers on board a certain ship did not always eat preserved asparagus while the men had not even a bean. I fear that he had been put up to this business by Mr. Quintus Slide, and that he made himself nasty. There was, however, so much nastiness of the kind going, that his little effort made no great difference. The conservative members of the Committee, on whose side of the House the inquiry had originated, did not scruple to lay all manner of charges to officers whom, were they themselves in power, they would be bound to support and would support with all their energies. About a quarter before four the members of the Com-

mittee had dismissed their last witness for the day, being desirous of not losing their chance of seats on so important an occasion, and hurried down into the lobby,—so that they might enter the House before prayers. Phineas here was button-holed by Barrington Erle, who said something to him as to the approaching division. They were standing in front of the door of the House, almost in the middle of the lobby, with a crowd of members around them,—on a spot which, as frequenters know, is hallowed ground, and must not be trodden by strangers. He was in the act of answering Erle, when he was touched on the arm, and on turning round, saw Mr. Clarkson. "About that little bill, Mr. Finn," said the horrible man, turning his chin round over his white cravat. "They always tell me at your lodgings that you ain't at home." By this time a policeman was explaining to Mr. Clarkson with gentle violence that he must not stand there,—that he must go aside into one of the corners. "I know all that," said Mr. Clarkson, retreating. "Of course I do. But what is a man to do when a gent won't see him at home?" Mr. Clarkson stood aside in his corner quietly, giving the policeman no occasion for further action against him; but in retreating he spoke loud, and there was a lull of voices around, and twenty members at least had heard what had been said. Phineas Finn no doubt had his privilege, but Mr. Clarkson was determined that the privilege should avail him as little as possible.

It was very hard. The real offender, the Lord of the Treasury, the peer's son, with a thousand a year paid by the country, was not treated with this cruel persecution. Phineas had in truth never taken a far-

thing from any one but his father; and though doubtless he owed something at this moment, he had no creditor of his own that was even angry with him. As the world goes he was a clear man,—but for this debt of his friend Fitzgibbon. He left Barrington Erle in the lobby, and hurried into the House, blushing up to the eyes. He looked for Fitzgibbon in his place, but the Lord of the Treasury was not as yet there. Doubtless he would be there for the division, and Phineas resolved that he would speak a bit of his mind before he let his friend out of his sight.

There were some great speeches made on that evening. Mr. Gresham delivered an oration of which men said that it would be known in England as long as there were any words remaining of English eloquence. In it he taunted Mr. Turnbull with being a recreant to the people, of whom he called himself so often the champion. But Mr. Turnbull was not in the least moved. Mr. Gresham knew well enough that Mr. Turnbull was not to be moved by any words;—but the words were not the less telling to the House and to the country. Men who heard it said that Mr. Gresham forgot himself in that speech, forgot his party, forgot his strategy, forgot his long-drawn schemes,—even his love of applause, and thought only of his cause. Mr. Daubeny replied to him with equal genius, and with equal skill,—if not with equal heart. Mr. Gresham had asked for the approbation of all present and of all future reformers. Mr. Daubeny denied him both,—the one because he would not succeed, and the other because he would not have deserved success. Then Mr. Mildmay made his reply, getting up at about three o'clock, and uttered a prayer,

—a futile prayer,—that this his last work on behalf of his countrymen might be successful. His bill was read a second time, as I have said before, in obedience to the casting vote of the Speaker,—but a majority such as that was tantamount to a defeat.

There was, of course, on that night no declaration as to what Ministers would do. Without a meeting of the Cabinet, and without some further consideration, though each might know that the bill would be withdrawn, they could not say in what way they would act. But late as was the hour, there were many words on the subject before members were in their beds. Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Monk left the House together, and perhaps no two gentlemen in it had in former sessions been more in the habit of walking home arm-in-arm and discussing what each had heard and what each had said in that assembly. Latterly these two men had gone strangely asunder in their paths,—very strangely for men who had for years walked so closely together. And this separation had been marked by violent words spoken against each other,—by violent words, at least, spoken against him in office by the one who had never contaminated his hands by the Queen's shilling. And yet, on such an occasion as this, they were able to walk away from the House arm-in-arm, and did not fly at each other's throat by the way.

"Singular enough, is it not," said Mr. Turnbull, "that the thing should have been so close?"

"Very odd," said Mr. Monk; "but men have said that it would be so all the week."

"Gresham was very fine," said Mr. Turnbull.

"Very fine, indeed. I never have heard anything like it before."

"Daubeny was very powerful too," said Mr. Turnbull.

"Yes;—no doubt. The occasion was great, and he answered to the spur. But Gresham's was the speech of the debate."

"Well;—yes; perhaps it was," said Mr. Turnbull, who was thinking of his own fight the other night, and who among his special friends had been much praised for what he had then done. But of course he made no allusion to his own doings,—or to those of Mr. Monk. In this way they conversed for some twenty minutes, till they parted; but neither of them interrogated the other as to what either might be called upon to do in consequence of the division which had just been effected. They might still be intimate friends, but the days of confidence between them were passed.

Phineas had seen Laurence Fitzgibbon enter the House,—which he did quite late in the night, so as to be in time for the division. No doubt he had dined in the House, and had been all the evening in the library,—or in the smoking-room. When Mr. Mildmay was on his legs making his reply, Fitzgibbon had sauntered in, not choosing to wait till he might be rung up by the bell at the last moment. Phineas was near him as they passed by the tellers, near him in the lobby, and near him again as they all passed back into the House. But at the last moment he thought that he would miss his prey. In the crowd as they left the House he failed to get his hand upon his friend's shoulder. But he hurried down the members' passage, and just at the gate leading out into Westminster Hall he overtook Fitzgibbon walking arm-in-arm with Barrington Erle.

"Laurence," he said, taking hold of his countryman's arm with a decided grasp, "I want to speak to you for a moment, if you please."

"Speak away," said Laurence. Then Phineas, looking up into his face, knew very well that he had been —what the world calls, dining.

Phineas remembered at the moment that Barrington Erle had been close to him when the odious moneylender had touched his arm and made his inquiry about that "little bill." He much wished to make Erle understand that the debt was not his own,—that he was not in the hands of usurers in reference to his own concerns. But there was a feeling within him that he still,—even still,—owed something to his friendship to Fitzgibbon. "Just give me your arm, and come on with me for a minute," said Phineas. "Erle will excuse us."

"Oh, blazes!" said Laurence, "what is it you 're after? I ain't good at private conferences at three in the morning. We 're all out, and is n't that enough for ye?"

"I have been dreadfully annoyed to-night," said Phineas, "and I wished to speak to you about it."

"Bedad, Finn, my boy, and there are a good many of us are annoyed;—eh, Barrington?"

Phineas perceived clearly that though Fitzgibbon had been dining, there was as much of cunning in all this as of wine, and he was determined not to submit to such unlimited ill-usage. "My annoyance comes from your friend, Mr. Clarkson, who had the impudence to address me in the lobby of the House."

"And serve you right too, Finn, my boy. Why the devil did you sport your oak to him? He has told

me all about it. There ain't such a patient little fellow as Clarkson anywhere, if you 'll only let him have his own way. He 'll look in, as he calls it, three times a week for a whole season, and do nothing further. Of course he don't like to be locked out."

"Is that the gentleman with whom the police interfered in the lobby?" Erle inquired.

"A confounded bill discounter to whom our friend here has introduced me,—for his own purposes," said Phineas.

"A very gentleman-like fellow," said Laurence. "Barrington knows him, I dare say. Look here, Finn, my boy, take my advice. Ask him to breakfast, and let him understand that the house will always be open to him." After this Laurence Fitzgibbon and Barrington Erle got into a cab together, and were driven away.

CHAPTER IV.

A CABINET MEETING.

And now will the Muses assist me while I sing an altogether new song? On the Tuesday the Cabinet met at the First Lord's official residence in Downing Street, and I will attempt to describe what, according to the bewildered brain of a poor fictionist, was said or might have been said, what was done or might have been done, on so august an occasion.

The poor fictionist very frequently finds himself to have been wrong in his description of things in general, and is told so roughly by the critics, and tenderly by the friends of his bosom. He is moved to tell of things of which he omits to learn the nature before he tells of them,—as should be done by a strictly honest fictionist. He catches salmon in October; or shoots his partridges in March. His dahlias bloom in June, and his birds sing in the autumn. He opens the opera-houses before Easter, and makes Parliament sit on a Wednesday evening. And then those terrible meshes of the law! How is a fictionist, in these excited days, to create the needed biting interest without legal difficulties; and how, again, is he to steer his little bark clear of so many rocks,—when the rocks and the shoals have been purposely arranged to make the taking of a pilot on board a necessity? As to those law meshes, a benevolent pilot will, indeed, now and again give a poor fictionist

a helping hand,—not used, however, generally with much discretion. But from whom is any assistance to come in the august matter of a Cabinet assembly? There can be no such assistance. No man can tell aught but they who will tell nothing. But then, again, there is this safety, that let the story be ever so mis-told,—let the fiction be ever so far removed from the truth, no critic short of a Cabinet Minister himself can convict the narrator of error.

It was a large dingy room, covered with a Turkey carpet, and containing a dark polished mahogany dinner-table, on very heavy carved legs, which an old messenger was preparing at two o'clock in the day for the use of her Majesty's Ministers. The table would have been large enough for fourteen guests, and along the side further from the fire, there were placed some six heavy chairs, good comfortable chairs, stuffed at the back as well as the seat,—but on the side nearer to the fire the chairs were placed irregularly; and there were four arm-chairs,—two on one side and two on the other. There were four windows to the room, which looked on to St. James's Park, and the curtains of the windows were dark and heavy,—as became the gravity of the purposes to which that chamber was appropriated. In old days it had been the dining-room of one Prime Minister after another. To Pitt it had been the abode of his own familiar prandial Penates, and Lord Liverpool had been dull there among his dull friends for long year after year. The Ministers of the present day find it more convenient to live in private homes, and, indeed, not unfrequently carry their Cabinets with them. But, under Mr. Mildmay's rule, the meetings were generally held in the old room at the official residence. Thrice

did the aged messenger move each arm-chair, now a little this way and now a little that, and then look at them as though something of the tendency of the coming meeting might depend on the comfort of its leading members. If Mr. Mildmay should find himself to be quite comfortable, so that he could hear what was said without a struggle to his ear, and see his colleagues' faces clearly, and feel the fire without burning his shins, it might be possible that he would not insist upon resigning. If this were so, how important was the work now confided to the hands of that aged messenger! When his anxious eyes had glanced round the room some half-a-dozen times, when he had touched each curtain, laid his hand upon every chair, and dusted certain papers which lay upon a side table,—and which had been lying there for two years, and at which no one ever looked or would look,—he gently crept away and ensconced himself in an easy-chair not far from the door of the chamber. For it might be necessary to stop the attempt of a rash intruder on those secret counsels.

Very shortly there was heard the ring of various voices in the passages—the voices of men speaking pleasantly, the voices of men with whom it seemed, from their tone, that things were doing well in the world. And then a cluster of four or five gentlemen entered the room. At first sight they seemed to be as ordinary gentlemen as you shall meet anywhere about Pall Mall on an afternoon. There was nothing about their outward appearance of the august wiggery of statecraft, nothing of the ponderous dignity of ministerial position. That little man in the square-cut coat,—we may almost call it a shooting-coat,—swinging an umbrella and

wearing no gloves, is no less a person than the Lord Chancellor,—Lord Weazeling,—who made a hundred thousand pounds as Attorney-General, and is supposed to be the best lawyer of his age. He is fifty, but he looks to be hardly over forty, and one might take him to be, from his appearance,—perhaps a clerk in the War Office, well-to-do, and popular among his brother-clerks. Immediately with him is Sir Harry Coldfoot, also a lawyer by profession, though he has never practised. He has been in the House for nearly thirty years, and is now at the Home Office. He is a stout, healthy, grey-haired gentleman, who certainly does not wear the cares of office on his face. Perhaps, however, no Minister gets more bullied than he by the press, and men say that he will be very willing to give up to some political enemy the control of the police, and the onerous duty of judging in all criminal appeals. Behind these come our friend Mr. Monk, young Lord Cantrip from the colonies next door, than whom no smarter young peer now does honour to our hereditary legislature, and Sir Marmaduke Morecombe, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Why Sir Marmaduke has always been placed in Mr. Mildmay's Cabinets nobody ever knew. As Chancellor of the Duchy he has nothing to do,—and were there anything, he would not do it. He rarely speaks in the House, and then does not speak well. He is a handsome man, or would be but for an assumption of grandeur in the carriage of his eyes, giving to his face a character of pomposity which he himself well deserves. He was in the Guards when young, and has been in Parliament since he ceased to be young. It must be supposed that Mr. Mildmay has found something in him, for he

has been included in three successive liberal Cabinets. He has probably the virtue of being true to Mr. Mildmay, and of being duly submissive to one whom he recognises as his superior.

Within two minutes afterwards the Duke followed, with Plantagenet Palliser. The Duke, as all the world knows, was the Duke of St. Bungay, the very front and head of the aristocratic old whigs of the country, —a man who has been thrice spoken of as Prime Minister, and who really might have filled the office had he not known himself to be unfit for it. The Duke has been consulted as to the making of Cabinets for the last five-and-thirty years, and is even now not an old man in appearance;—a fussy, popular, clever, conscientious man, whose digestion has been too good to make politics a burden to him, but who has thought seriously about his country, and is one who will be sure to leave memoirs behind him. He was born in the semi-purple of ministerial influences, and men say of him that he is honester than his uncle, who was Canning's friend, but not so great a man as his grandfather, with whom Fox once quarrelled, and whom Burke loved. Plantagenet Palliser, himself the heir to a dukedom, was the young Chancellor of the Exchequer, of whom some statesmen thought much as the rising star of the age. If industry, rectitude of purpose, and a certain clearness of intellect may prevail, Planty Pall, as he is familiarly called, may become a great Minister.

Then came Viscount Thrift by himself,—the First Lord of the Admiralty, with the whole weight of a new iron-clad fleet upon his shoulders. He has undertaken the Herculean task of cleansing the dockyards,—and

with it the lesser work of keeping afloat a navy that may be esteemed by his countrymen to be the best in the world. And he thinks that he will do both, if only Mr. Mildmay will not resign;—an industrious, honest, self-denying nobleman, who works without ceasing from morn to night, and who hopes to rise in time to high things,—to the translating of Homer, perhaps, and the wearing of the Garter.

Close behind him there was a ruck of Ministers, with the much-honoured grey-haired old Premier in the midst of them. There was Mr. Gresham, the Foreign Minister, said to be the greatest orator in Europe, on whose shoulders it was thought that the mantle of Mr. Mildmay would fall,—to be worn, however, quite otherwise than Mr. Mildmay had worn it. For Mr. Gresham is a man with no feelings for the past, void of historical association, hardly with memories,—living altogether for the future which he is anxious to fashion anew out of the vigour of his own brain. Whereas, with Mr. Mildmay, even his love of reform is an inherited passion for an old-world liberalism. And there was with them Mr. Legge Wilson, the brother of a peer, Secretary at War, a great scholar and a polished gentleman, very proud of his position as a Cabinet Minister, but conscious that he has hardly earned it by political work. And Lord Plinlimmon is with them, the Comptroller of India,—of all working lords the most jaunty, the most pleasant, and the most popular, very good at taking chairs at dinners, and making becoming speeches at the shortest notice, a man apparently very free and open in his ways of life,—but cautious enough in truth as to every step, knowing well

how hard it is to climb and how easy to fall. Mr. Mildmay entered the room leaning on Lord Plinlimmon's arm, and when he made his way up among the arm-chairs upon the rug before the fire, the others clustered around him with cheering looks and kindly questions. Then came the Privy Seal, our old friend Lord Brentford, last,—and I would say least, but that the words of no councillor could go for less in such an assemblage than will those of Sir Marmaduke Morecombe, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Mildmay was soon seated in one of the arm-chairs, while Lord Plinlimmon leaned against the table close at his elbow. Mr. Gresham stood upright at the corner of the chimney-piece furthest from Mr. Mildmay, and Mr. Palliser at that nearest to him. The Duke took the arm-chair close at Mr. Mildmay's left hand. Lord Plinlimmon was, as I have said, leaning against the table, but the Lord Chancellor, who was next to him, sat upon it. Viscount Thrift and Mr. Monk occupied chairs on the further side of the table, near to Mr. Mildmay's end, and Mr. Legge Wilson placed himself at the head of the table, thus joining them as it were into a body. The Home Secretary stood before the Lord Chancellor screening him from the fire, and the Chancellor of the Duchy, after waiting for a few minutes as though in doubt, took one of the vacant arm-chairs. The young lord from the Colonies stood a little behind the shoulders of his great friend from the Foreign Office; and the Privy Seal, after moving about for a while uneasily, took a chair behind the Chancellor of the Duchy. One arm-chair was thus left vacant, but there was no other comer.

"It is not so bad as I thought it would be," said

the Duke, speaking aloud, but nevertheless addressing himself specially to his chief.

"It was bad enough," said Mr. Mildmay, laughing.

"Bad enough indeed," said Sir Marmaduke Morecombe, without any laughter.

"And such a good bill lost," said Lord Plinlimmon. "The worst of these failures is, that the same identical bill can never be brought in again."

"So that if the lost bill was best, the bill that will not be lost can only be second best," said the Lord Chancellor.

"I certainly did think that after the debate before Easter we should not have come to shipwreck about the ballot," said Mr. Mildmay.

"It was brewing for us all along," said Mr. Gresham, who then with a gesture of his hand and a pressure of his lips withheld words which he was nearly uttering, and which would not, probably, have been complimentary to Mr. Turnbull. As it was, he turned half round and said something to Lord Cantrip which was not audible to any one else in the room. It was worthy of note, however, that Mr. Turnbull's name was not once mentioned aloud at that meeting.

"I am afraid it was brewing all along," said Sir Marmaduke Morecombe gravely.

"Well, gentlemen, we must take it as we get it," said Mr. Mildmay, still smiling. "And now we must consider what we shall do at once." Then he paused as though expecting that counsel would come to him first from one colleague and then from another. But no such counsel came, and probably Mr. Mildmay did not in the least expect that it would come.

"We cannot stay where we are, of course," said the

Duke. The Duke was privileged to say as much as that. But though every man in the room knew that it must be so, no one but the Duke would have said it, before Mr. Mildmay had spoken plainly himself.

"No," said Mr. Mildmay; "I suppose that we can hardly stay where we are. Probably none of us wish it, gentlemen." Then he looked round upon his colleagues, and there came a sort of an assent, though there were no spoken words. The sound from Sir Marmaduke Morecombe was louder than that from the others;—but yet from him it was no more than an attesting grunt. "We have two things to consider," continued Mr. Mildmay,—and though he spoke in a very low voice, every word was heard by all present,—"two things chiefly, that is; the work of the country and the Queen's comfort. I propose to see her Majesty this afternoon at five,—that is, in something less than two hours' time, and I hope to be able to tell the House by seven what has taken place between her Majesty and me. My friend, his Grace, will do as much in the House of Lords. If you agree with me, gentlemen, I will explain to the Queen that it is not for the welfare of the country that we should retain our places, and I will place your resignations and my own in her Majesty's hands."

"You will advise her Majesty to send for Lord De Terrier," said Mr. Gresham.

"Certainly;—there will be no other course open to me."

"Or to her," said Mr. Gresham. To this remark from the rising Minister of the day, no word of reply was made; but of those present in the room three or four of the most experienced servants of the Crown felt that

Mr. Gresham had been imprudent. The Duke, who had ever been afraid of Mr. Gresham, told Mr. Palliser afterwards that such an observation should not have been made; and Sir Harry Coldfoot pondered upon it uneasily, and Sir Marmaduke Morecombe asked Mr. Mildmay what he thought about it. "Times change so much, and with the times the feelings of men," said Mr. Mildmay. But I doubt whether Sir Marmaduke quite understood him.

There was silence in the room for a moment or two after Mr. Gresham had spoken, and then Mr. Mildmay again addressed his friends. "Of course it may be possible that my Lord De Terrier may foresee difficulties, or may find difficulties which will oblige him, either at once, or after an attempt has been made, to decline the task which her Majesty will probably commit to him. All of us, no doubt, know that the arrangement of a Government is not the most easy task in the world; and that it is not made the more easy by an absence of a majority in the House of Commons."

"He would dissolve, I presume," said the Duke.

"I should say so," continued Mr. Mildmay. "But it may not improbably come to pass that her Majesty will feel herself obliged to send again for some one or two of us, that we may tender to her Majesty the advice which we owe to her;—for me, for instance, or for my friend the Duke. In such a matter she would be much guided probably by what Lord De Terrier might have suggested to her. Should this be so, and should I be consulted, my present feeling is that we should resume our offices so that the necessary business of the session should be completed, and that we should then dissolve Parliament, and thus ascertain the opin-

ion of the country. In such case, however, we should of course meet again."

"I quite think that the course proposed by Mr. Mildmay will be the best," said the Duke, who had no doubt already discussed the matter with his friend the Prime Minister in private. No one else said a word either of argument or disagreement, and the Cabinet Council was broken up. The old messenger, who had been asleep in his chair, stood up and bowed as the Ministers walked by him, and then went in and re-arranged the chairs.

"He has as much idea of giving up as you or I have," said Lord Cantrip to his friend Mr. Gresham, as they walked arm-in-arm together from the Treasury Chambers across St James's Park towards the clubs.

"I am not sure that he is not right," said Mr. Gresham.

"Do you mean for himself or for the country?" asked Lord Cantrip.

"For his future fame. They who have abdicated and have clung to their abdication have always lost by it. Cincinnatus was brought back again, and Charles V. is felt to have been foolish. The peaches of retired Ministers of which we hear so often have generally been cultivated in a constrained seclusion;—or at least the world so believes." They were talking probably of Mr. Mildmay, as to whom some of his colleagues had thought it probable, knowing that he would now resign, that he would have to-day declared his intention of laying aside forever the cares of office.

Mr. Monk walked home alone, and as he went there was something of a feeling of disappointment at heart, which made him ask himself whether Mr. Turnbull

might not have been right in rebuking him for joining the Government. But this, I think, was in no way due to Mr. Mildmay's resignation, but rather to a conviction on Mr. Monk's part that he had contributed but little to his country's welfare by sitting in Mr. Mildmay's Cabinet.

CHAPTER V.

MR. KENNEDY'S LUCK.

AFTER the holding of that Cabinet Council of which the author has dared to attempt a slight sketch in the last chapter, there were various visits made to the Queen, first by Mr. Mildmay, and then by Lord De Terrier, afterwards by Mr. Mildmay and the Duke together, and then again by Lord De Terrier; and there were various explanations made to Parliament in each House, and rivals were very courteous to each other, promising assistance;—and at the end of it the old men held their seats. The only change made was effected by the retirement of Sir Marmaduke Morecombe, who was raised to the peerage, and by the selection of—Mr. Kennedy to fill his place in the Cabinet. Mr. Kennedy during the late debate had made one of those speeches, few and far between, by which he had created for himself a parliamentary reputation; but, nevertheless, all men expressed their great surprise, and no one could quite understand why Mr. Kennedy had been made a Cabinet Minister.

"It is impossible to say whether he is pleased or not," said Lady Laura, speaking of him to Phineas. "I am pleased, of course."

"His ambition must be gratified," said Phineas.

"It would be, if he had any," said Lady Laura.

"I do not believe in a man lacking ambition."

"It is hard to say. There are men who by no means

wear their hearts upon their sleeves, and my husband is one of them. He told me that it would be unbecoming in him to refuse, and that was all he said to me about it."

The old men held their seats, but they did so as it were only upon further trial. Mr. Mildmay took the course which he had indicated to his colleagues at the Cabinet meeting. Before all the explanations and journeyings were completed, April was over, and the much-needed Whitsuntide holidays were coming on. But little of the routine work of the session had been done; and, as Mr. Mildmay told the House more than once, the country would suffer were the Queen to dissolve Parliament at this period of the year. The old Ministers would go on with the business of the country, Lord De Terrier with his followers having declined to take affairs into their hands; and at the close of the session, which should be made as short as possible, writs should be issued for new elections. This was Mr. Mildmay's programme, and it was one of which no one dared to complain very loudly.

Mr. Turnbull, indeed, did speak a word of caution. He told Mr. Mildmay that he had lost his bill, good in other respects, because he had refused to introduce the ballot into his measure. Let him promise to be wiser for the future, and to obey the manifested wishes of the country, and then all would be well with him. In answer to this, Mr. Mildmay declared that to the best of his power of reading the country, his countrymen had manifested no such wish; and that if they did so, if by the fresh election it should be shown that the ballot was in truth desired, he would at once leave the execution of their wishes to abler and younger

hands. Mr. Turnbull expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the Minister's answers, and said that the coming election would show whether he or Mr. Mildmay were right.

Many men, and among them some of his colleagues, thought that Mr. Mildmay had been imprudent. "No man ought ever to pledge himself to anything," said Sir Harry Coldfoot to the Duke;—"that is, to anything unnecessary." The Duke, who was very true to Mr. Mildmay, made no reply to this, but even he thought that his old friend had been betrayed into a promise too rapidly. But the pledge was given, and some people already began to make much of it. There appeared leader after leader in the People's Banner urging the constituencies to take advantage of the Prime Minister's words, and to show clearly at the hustings that they desired the ballot. "You had better come over to us, Mr. Finn; you had indeed," said Mr. Slide. "Now 's the time to do it, and show yourself a people's friend. You 'll have to do it sooner or later, —whether or no. Come to us and we 'll be your horgan."

But in those days Phineas was something less in love with Mr. Quintus Slide than he had been at the time of the great debate, for he was becoming more and more closely connected with people who in their ways of living and modes of expression were very unlike Mr. Slide. This advice was given to him about the end of May, and at that time Lord Chiltern was living with him in the lodgings in Great Marlborough Street. Miss Pouncefoot had temporarily vacated her rooms on the first floor, and the lord with the broken bones had condescended to occupy them. "I don't know

that I like having a lord," Bunce had said to his wife. "It 'll soon come to you not liking anybody decent anywhere," Mrs. Bunce had replied; "but I shan't ask any questions about it. When you 're wasting so much time and money at your dirty law proceedings, it 's well that somebody should earn something at home."

There had been many discussions about the bringing of Lord Chiltern up to London, in all of which Phineas had been concerned. Lord Brentford had thought that his son had better remain down at the Willingford Bull; and although he said that the rooms were at his son's disposal should Lord Chiltern choose to come to London, still he said it in such a way that Phineas, who went down to Willingford, could not tell his friend that he would be made welcome in Portman Square. "I think I shall leave those diggings altogether," Lord Chiltern said to him. "My father annoys me by everything he says and does, and I annoy him by saying and doing nothing." Then there came an invitation to him from Lady Laura and Mr. Kennedy. Would he come to Grosvenor Place? Lady Laura pressed this very much, though in truth Mr. Kennedy had hardly done more than give a cold assent. But Lord Chiltern would not hear of it. "There is some reason for my going to my father's house," said he, "though he and I are not the best friends in the world; but there can be no reason for my going to the house of a man I dislike so much as I do Robert Kennedy." The matter was settled in the manner told above. Miss Pouncefoot's rooms were prepared for him at Mr. Bunce's house, and Phineas Finn went down to Willingford and brought him up. "I 've sold Bonebreaker," he said,—"to a young fellow whose neck

will certainly be the sacrifice if he attempts to ride him. I 'd have given him to you, Phineas, only you would n't have known what to do with him."

Lord Chiltern when he came up to London was still in bandages, though, as the surgeon said, his bones seemed to have been made to be broken and set again; and his bandages of course were a sufficient excuse for his visiting the house neither of his father nor his brother-in-law. But Lady Laura went to him frequently, and thus became acquainted with our hero's home and with Mrs. Bunce. And there were messages taken from Violet to the man in bandages, some of which lost nothing in the carrying. Once Lady Laura tried to make Violet think that it would be right, or rather not wrong, that they two should go together to Lord Chiltern's rooms.

"And would you have me tell my aunt, or would you have me not tell her?" Violet asked.

"I would have you do just as you pleased," Lady Laura answered.

"So I shall," Violet replied, "but I will do nothing that I should be ashamed to tell any one. Your brother professes to be in love with me."

"He is in love with you," said Lady Laura. "Even you do not pretend to doubt his faith."

"Very well. In those circumstances a girl should not go to a man's rooms unless she means to consider herself as engaged to him, even with his sister;—not though he had broken every bone in his skin. I know what I may do, Laura, and I know what I may n't; and I won't be led either by you or by my aunt."

"May I give him your love?"

"No;—because you 'll give it in a wrong spirit.

He knows well enough that I wish him well;—but you may tell him that from me, if you please. He has from me all those wishes which one friend owes to another."

But there were other messages sent from Violet through Phineas Finn which she worded with more show of affection,—perhaps as much for the discomfort of Phineas as for the consolation of Lord Chiltern. "Tell him to take care of himself," said Violet, "and bid him not to have any more of those wild brutes that are not fit for any Christian to ride. Tell him that I say so. It 's a great thing to be brave; but what 's the use of being foolhardy?"

The session was to be closed at the end of June, to the great dismay of London tradesmen and of young ladies who had not been entirely successful in the early season. But before the old Parliament was closed, and the writs for the new election were despatched, there occurred an incident which was of very much importance to Phineas Finn. Near the end of June, when the remaining days of the session were numbered by three or four, he had been dining at Lord Brentford's house in Portman Square in company with Mr. Kennedy. But Lady Laura had not been there. At this time he saw Lord Brentford not unfrequently, and there was always a word said about Lord Chiltern. The father would ask how the son occupied himself, and Phineas would hope,—though hitherto he had hoped in vain,—that he would induce the Earl to come and see Lord Chiltern. Lord Brentford could never be brought to that; but it was sufficiently evident that he would have done so, had he not been afraid to descend so far from the altitude of his paternal wrath. On

this evening, at about eleven, Mr. Kennedy and Phineas left the house together, and walked from the Square through Orchard Street into Oxford Street. Here their ways parted, but Phineas crossed the road with Mr. Kennedy, as he was making some reply to a second invitation to Loughlinter. Phineas, considering what had been said before on the subject, thought that the invitation came late, and that it was not warmly worded. He had, therefore, declined it, and was in the act of declining it, when he crossed the road with Mr. Kennedy. In walking down Orchard Street from the Square he had seen two men standing in the shadow a few yards up a mews or small alley that was there, but had thought nothing of them. It was just that period of the year when there is hardly any of the darkness of night; but at this moment there were symptoms of coming rain, and heavy drops began to fall; and there were big clouds coming and going before the young moon. Mr. Kennedy had said that he would get a cab, but he had seen none as he crossed Oxford Street, and had put up his umbrella as he made his way towards Park Street. Phineas as he left him distinctly perceived the same two figures on the other side of Oxford Street, and then turning into the shadow of a butcher's porch, he saw them cross the street in the wake of Mr. Kennedy. It was now raining in earnest, and the few passengers who were out were scudding away quickly, this way and that.

It hardly occurred to Phineas to think that any danger was imminent to Mr. Kennedy from the men, but it did occur to him that he might as well take some notice of the matter. Phineas knew that Mr. Kennedy would make his way down Park Street, that

being his usual route from Portman Square towards his own home, and knew also that he himself could again come across Mr. Kennedy's track by going down North Audley Street to the corner of Grosvenor Square, and thence by Brook Street into Park Street. Without much thought, therefore, he went out of his own course down to the corner of the Square, hurrying his steps till he was running, and then ran along Brook Street, thinking as he went of some special word that he might say to Mr. Kennedy as an excuse, should he again come across his late companion. He reached the corner of Park Street before that gentleman could have been there, unless he also had run; but just in time to see him as he was coming on,—and also to see in the dark glimmering of the slight uncertain moonlight that the two men were behind him. He retreated a step backwards in the corner, resolving that when Mr. Kennedy came up, they two would go on together; for now it was clear that Mr. Kennedy was followed. But Mr. Kennedy did not reach the corner. When he was within two doors of it, one of the men had followed him up quickly, and had thrown something round his throat from behind him. Phineas understood well now that his friend was in the act of being garrotted, and that his instant assistance was needed. He rushed forward, and as the second ruffian had been close upon the footsteps of the first, there was almost instantaneously a concourse of the four men. But there was no fight. The man who had already nearly succeeded in putting Mr. Kennedy on to his back, made no attempt to seize his prey when he found that so unwelcome an addition had joined the party, but instantly turned to fly. His companion was turning

also, but Phineas was too quick for him, and having seized on to his collar, held to him with all his power. "Dash it all," said the man, "did n't yer see as how I was a-hurrying up to help the gen'leman myself?" Phineas, however, had n't seen this, and held on gallantly, and in a couple of minutes the first ruffian was back again upon the spot in the custody of a policeman. "You 've done it uncommon neat, sir," said the policeman, complimenting Phineas upon his performance. "If the gen'leman ain't none the worst for it, it 'll have been a very pretty evening's amusement." Mr. Kennedy was now leaning against the railings, and hitherto had been unable to declare whether he was really injured or not, and it was not till a second policeman came up that the hero of the night was at liberty to attend closely to his friend.

Mr. Kennedy, when he was able to speak, declared that for a minute or two he had thought that his neck had been broken; and he was not quite convinced till he found himself in his own house, that nothing more serious had really happened to him than certain bruises round his throat. The policeman was for a while anxious that at any rate Phineas should go with him to the police-office; but at last consented to take the addresses of the two gentlemen. When he found that Mr. Kennedy was a member of Parliament, and that he was designated as Right Honourable, his respect for the garrotter became more great, and he began to feel that the night was indeed a night of great importance. He expressed unbounded admiration at Mr. Finn's success in his own line, and made repeated promises that the men should be forthcoming on the morrow. Could a cab be got? Of course a cab could be got.

A cab was got, and within a quarter of an hour of the making of the attack, the two members of Parliament were on their way to Grosvenor Place.

There was hardly a word spoken in the cab, for Mr. Kennedy was in pain. When, however, they reached the door in Grosvenor Place, Phineas wanted to go, and leave his friend with the servants, but this the Cabinet Minister would not allow. "Of course you must see my wife," he said. So they went upstairs into the drawing-room, and then upon the stairs, by the lights of the house, Phineas could perceive that his companion's face was bruised and black with dirt, and that his cravat was gone.

"I have been garrotted," said the Cabinet Minister to his wife.

"What?"

"Simply that;—or should have been, if he had not been there. How he came there, God only knows."

The wife's anxiety, and then her gratitude, need hardly be described,—nor the astonishment of the husband, which by no means decreased on reflection, at the opportune reappearance in the nick of time of the man whom three minutes before the attack he had left in the act of going in the opposite direction.

"I had seen the men, and thought it best to run round by the corner of Grosvenor Square," said Phineas.

"May God bless you," said Lady Laura.

"Amen," said the Cabinet Minister.

"I think he was born to be my friend," said Lady Laura.

The Cabinet Minister said nothing more that night. He was never given to much talking, and the little ac-

cident which had just occurred to him did not tend to make words easy to him. But he pressed our hero's hand, and Lady Laura said that of course Phineas would come to them on the morrow. Phineas remarked that his first business must be to go to the police-office, but he promised that he would come down to Grosvenor Place immediately afterwards. Then Lady Laura also pressed his hand, and looked—; she looked, I think, as though she thought that Phineas would only have done right had he repeated the offence which he had committed under the waterfall of Loughlinter.

"Garrotted!" said Lord Chiltern, when Phineas told him the story before they went to bed that night. He had been smoking, sipping brandy and water, and waiting for Finn's return. "Robert Kennedy garrotted!"

"The fellow was in the act of doing it."

"And you stopped him?"

"Yes;—I got there just in time. Was n't it lucky?"

"You ought to be garrotted yourself. I should have lent the man a hand had I been there."

"How can you say anything so horrible? But you are drinking too much, old fellow, and I shall lock the bottle up."

"If there were no one in London drank more than I do, the wine merchants would have a bad time of it. And so the new Cabinet Minister has been garrotted in the street. Of course I 'm sorry for poor Laura's sake."

"Luckily he 's not much the worse for it;—only a little bruised."

"I wonder whether it 's on the cards he should be improved by it;—worse, except in the way of being strangled, he could not be. However, as he 's my

brother-in-law, I 'm obliged to you for rescuing him. Come, I 'll go to bed. I must say, if he was to be garrotted I should like to have been there to see it." That was the manner in which Lord Chiltern received the tidings of the terrible accident which had occurred to his near relative.

CHAPTER VI.

FINN FOR LOUGHTON.

By three o'clock in the day after the little accident which was told in the last chapter, all the world knew that Mr. Kennedy, the new Cabinet Minister, had been garrotted, or half garrotted, and that that child of fortune, Phineas Finn, had dropped upon the scene out of heaven at the exact moment of time, had taken the two garrotters prisoners, and saved the Cabinet Minister's neck and valuables,—if not his life. "Bedad," said Laurence Fitzgibbon, when he came to hear this, "that fellow 'll marry an heiress, and be Secretary for Oireland yet." A good deal was said about it to Phineas at the clubs, but a word or two that was said to him by Violet Effingham was worth all the rest. "Why, what a Paladin you are! But you succour men in distress instead of maidens." "That 's my bad luck," said Phineas. "The other will come no doubt in time," Violet replied; "and then you 'll get your reward." He knew that such words from a girl mean nothing,—especially from such a girl as Violet Effingham; but nevertheless they were very pleasant to him.

"Of course you will come to us at Loughlinter when Parliament is up?" Lady Laura said the same day.

"I don't know really. You see I must go over to Ireland about my re-election."

"What has that to do with it? You are only mak-

ing out excuses. We go down on the first of July, and the English elections won't begin till the middle of the month. It will be August before the men of Loughshane are ready for you."

"To tell you the truth, Lady Laura," said Phineas, "I doubt whether the men of Loughshane,—or rather the man of Loughshane, will have anything more to say to me."

"What man do you mean?"

"Lord Tulla. He was in a passion with his brother before, and I got the advantage of it. Since that he has paid his brother's debts for the fifteenth time, and of course is ready to fight any battle for the forgiven prodigal. Things are not as they were, and my father tells me that he thinks I shall be beaten."

"That is bad news."

"It is what I have a right to expect."

Every word of information that had come to Phineas about Loughshane since Mr. Mildmay had decided upon a dissolution, had gone towards making him feel at first that there was a great doubt as to his re-election, and at last that there was almost a certainty against him. And as these tidings reached him they made him very unhappy. Since he had been in Parliament he had very frequently regretted that he had left the shades of the Inns of Court for the glare of Westminster; and he had more than once made up his mind that he would desert the glare and return to the shade. But now, when the moment came in which such desertion seemed to be compulsory on him, when there would be no longer a choice, the seat in Parliament was dearer to him than ever. If he had gone of his own free will,—so he told himself,—there would

have been something of nobility in such going. Mr. Low would have respected him, and even Mrs. Low might have taken him back to the friendship of her severe bosom. But he would go back now as a cur with his tail between his legs,—kicked out, as it were, from Parliament. Returning to Lincoln's Inn soiled with failure, having accomplished nothing, having broken down on the only occasion on which he had dared to show himself on his legs, not having opened a single useful book during the two years in which he had sat in Parliament, burdened with Laurence Fitzgibbon's debt, and not quite free from debt of his own, how could he start himself in any way by which he might even hope to win success? He must, he told himself, give up all thought of practising in London and betake himself to Dublin. He could not dare to face his friends in London as a young briefless barrister.

On this evening, the evening subsequent to that on which Mr. Kennedy had been attacked, the House was sitting in Committee of Ways and Means, and there came on a discussion as to a certain vote for the army. It had been known that there would be such discussion; and Mr. Monk having heard from Phineas a word or two now and again about the potted peas, had recommended him to be ready with a few remarks if he wished to support the Government in the matter of that vote. Phineas did so wish, having learned quite enough in the Committee Room upstairs to make him believe that a large importation of the potted peas from Holstein would not be for the advantage of the army or navy,—or for that of the country at large. Mr. Monk had made his suggestion without the slightest allusion to the former failure,—just as though Phineas

were a practised speaker accustomed to be on his legs three or four times a week. "If I find a chance, I will," said Phineas, taking the advice just as it was given.

Soon after prayers, a word was said in the House as to the ill-fortune which had befallen the new Cabinet Minister. Mr. Daubeny had asked Mr. Mildmay whether violent hands had not been laid in the dead of night on the sacred throat,—the throat that should have been sacred,—of the new Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and had expressed regret that the Ministry, —which was, he feared, in other respects somewhat infirm,—should now have been further weakened by this injury to that new bulwark with which it had endeavoured to support itself. The Prime Minister, answering his old rival in the same strain, said that the calamity might have been very severe, both to the country and to the Cabinet; but that fortunately for the community at large, a gallant young member of that House,—and he was proud to say a supporter of the Government,—had appeared upon the spot at the nick of time;—"As a god out of a machine," said Mr. Daubeny, interrupting him;—"By no means as a god out of a machine," continued Mr. Mildmay, "but as a real help in a very real trouble, and succeeded not only in saving my right honourable friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy, but in arresting the two malefactors who attempted to rob him in the street." Then there was a cry of "name;" and Mr. Mildmay of course named the member for Loughshane. It so happened that Phineas was not in the House, but he heard it all when he came down to attend the Committee of Ways and Means.

Then came on the discussion about provisions in the army, the subject being mooted by one of Mr. Turnbull's close allies. The gentleman on the other side of the House who had moved for the potted peas Committee, was silent on the occasion, having felt that the result of that Committee had not been exactly what he had expected. The evidence respecting such of the Holstein potted peas as had been used in this country was not very favourable to them. But, nevertheless, the rebound from that Committee,—the very fact that such a Committee had been made to sit,—gave ground for a hostile attack. To attack is so easy, when a complete refutation barely suffices to save the Minister attacked,—does not suffice to save him from future dim memories of something having been wrong,—and brings down no disgrace whatsoever on the promoter of the false charge. The promoter of the false charge simply expresses his gratification at finding that he had been misled by erroneous information. It is not customary for him to express gratification at the fact, that out of all the mud which he has thrown, some will probably stick! Phineas, when the time came, did get on his legs, and spoke perhaps two or three dozen words. The doing so seemed to come to him quite naturally. He had thought very little about it beforehand,—having resolved not to think of it. And indeed the occasion was one of no great importance. The Speaker was not in the chair, and the House was thin, and he intended to make no speech,—merely to say something which he had to say. Till he had finished he hardly remembered that he was doing that, in attempting to do which he had before failed so egregiously. It was not till he sat down that he began to ask himself whether

the scene was swimming before his eyes as it had done on former occasions; as it had done even when he had so much as thought of making a speech. Now he was astonished at the easiness of the thing, and as he left the House told himself that he had overcome the difficulty just when the victory could be of no avail to him. Had he been more eager, more constant in his purpose, he might at any rate have shown the world that he was fit for the place which he had presumed to take before he was cast out of it.

On the next morning he received a letter from his father. Dr. Finn had seen Lord Tulla, having been sent for to relieve his lordship in a fit of the gout, and had been informed by the Earl that he meant to fight the borough to the last man;—had he said to the last shilling he would have spoken with perhaps more accuracy. "You see, doctor, your son has had it for two years, as you may say for nothing, and I think he ought to give way. He can't expect that he 's to go on there as though it were his own." And then his lordship, upon whom this touch of the gout had come somewhat sharply, expressed himself with considerable animation. The old doctor behaved with much spirit. "I told the Earl," he said, "that I could not undertake to say what you might do; but that as you had come forward at first with my sanction, I could not withdraw it now. He asked me if I should support you with money; I said that I should to a moderate extent. 'By G——,' said the Earl, 'a moderate extent will go a very little way, I can tell you.' Since that he has had Duggin with him; so, I suppose, I shall not see him any more. You can do as you please now; but, from what I hear, I fear you will have no chance."

Then with much bitterness of spirit Phineas resolved that he would not interfere with Lord Tulla at Loughshane. He would go at once to the Reform Club and explain his reasons to Barrington Erle and others there who would be interested.

But he first went to Grosvenor Place. Here he was shown up into Mr. Kennedy's room. Mr. Kennedy was up and seated in an arm-chair by an open window looking over into the Queen's garden; but he was in his dressing-gown, and was to be regarded as an invalid. And indeed as he could not turn his neck, or thought that he could not do so, he was not very fit to go out about his work. Let us hope that the affairs of the Duchy of Lancaster did not suffer materially by his absence. We may take it for granted that with a man so sedulous as to all his duties there was no arrear of work when the accident took place. He put out his hand to Phineas, and said some word in a whisper,—some word or two among which Phineas caught the sound of "potted peas,"—and then continued to look out of the window. There are men who are utterly prostrated by any bodily ailment, and it seemed that Mr. Kennedy was one of them. Phineas, who was full of his own bad news, had intended to tell his sad story at once. But he perceived that the neck of the Chancellor of the Duchy was too stiff to allow of his taking any interest in external matters, and so he refrained. "What does the doctor say about it?" said Phineas, perceiving that just for the present there could be only one possible subject for remark. Mr. Kennedy was beginning to describe in a long whisper what the doctor did think about it, when Lady Laura came into the room.

Of course they began at first to talk about Mr. Ken-

nedy. It would not have been kind to him not to have done so. And Lady Laura made much of the injury, as it behoves a wife to do in such circumstances for the sake both of the sufferer and of the hero. She declared her conviction that had Phineas been a moment later her husband's neck would have been irredeemably broken.

"I don't think they ever do kill the people," said Phineas. "At any rate they don't mean to do so."

"I thought they did," said Lady Laura.

"I fancy not," said Phineas, eager in the cause of truth.

"I think this man was very clumsy," whispered Mr. Kennedy.

"Perhaps he was a beginner," said Phineas, "and that may make a difference. If so, I 'm afraid we have interfered with his education."

Then, by degrees, the conversation got away to other things, and Lady Laura asked him after Loughshane.

"I 've made up my mind to give it up," said he, smiling as he spoke.

"I was afraid there was but a bad chance," said Lady Laura, smiling also.

"My father has behaved so well!" said Phineas. "He has written to say he 'll find the money, if I determine to contest the borough. I mean to write to him by to-night's post to decline the offer. I have no right to spend the money, and I should n't succeed if I did spend it. Of course it makes me a little down in the mouth." And then he smiled again.

"I 've got a plan of my own," said Lady Laura.

"What plan?"

"Or rather it is n't mine, but papa's. Old Mr.

Standish is going to give up Loughton, and papa wants you to come and try your luck there."

"Lady Laura!"

"It is n't quite a certainty, you know, but I suppose it 's as near a certainty as anything left." And this came from a strong radical reformer!

"Lady Laura, I could n't accept such a favour from your father." Then Mr. Kennedy nodded his head very slightly and whispered, "Yes, yes." "I could n't think of it," said Phineas Finn. "I have no right to such a favour."

"That is a matter entirely for papa's consideration," said Lady Laura, with an affectation of solemnity in her voice. "I think it has always been felt that any politician may accept such an offer as that when it is made to him, but that no politician should ask for it. My father feels that he has to do the best he can with his influence in the borough, and therefore he comes to you."

"It is n't that," said Phineas, somewhat rudely.

"Of course private feelings have their weight," said Lady Laura. "It is not probable that papa would have gone to a perfect stranger. And perhaps, Mr. Finn, I may own that Mr. Kennedy and I would both be very sorry that you should not be in the House, and that that feeling on our part has had some weight with my father."

"Of course you 'll stand?" whispered Mr. Kennedy, still looking straight out of the window, as though the slightest attempt to turn his neck would be fraught with danger to himself and the Duchy.

"Papa has desired me to ask you to call upon him," said Lady Laura. "I don't suppose there is very much

to be said, as each of you know so well the other's way of thinking. But you had better see him to-day or to-morrow."

Of course Phineas was persuaded before he left Mr. Kennedy's room. Indeed, when he came to think of it, there appeared to him to be no valid reason why he should not sit for Loughton. The favour was of a kind that had prevailed from time out of mind in England, between the most respectable of the great land magnates, and young rising liberal politicians. Burke, Fox, and Canning had all been placed in Parliament by similiar influence. Of course he, Phineas Finn, desired earnestly,—longed in his very heart of hearts, —to extinguish all such parliamentary influence, to root out forever the last vestige of close borough nominations; but while the thing remained it was better that the thing should contribute to the liberal than to the conservative strength of the House,—and if to the liberal, how was this to be achieved but by the acceptance of such influence by some liberal candidate? And if it were right that it should be accepted by any liberal candidate,—then, why not by him? The logic of this argument seemed to him to be perfect. He felt something like a sting of reproach as he told himself that in truth this great offer was made to him, not on account of the excellence of his politics, but because he had been instrumental in saving Lord Brentford's son-in-law from the violence of garrotters. But he crushed these qualms of conscience as being over-scrupulous, and, as he told himself, not practical. You must take the world as you find it, with a struggle to be something more honest than those around you. Phineas, as he preached to himself this sermon, declared

to himself that they who attempted more than this flew too high in the clouds to be of service to men and women upon earth.

As he did not see Lord Brentford that day he postponed writing to his father for twenty-four hours. On the following morning he found the Earl at home in Portman Square, having first discussed the matter fully with Lord Chiltern. "Do not scruple about me," said Lord Chiltern; "you are quite welcome to the borough for me."

"But if I did not stand, would you do so? There are so many reasons which ought to induce you to accept a seat in Parliament!"

"Whether that be true or not, Phineas, I shall not accept my father's interest at Loughton, unless it be offered to me in a way in which it never will be offered. You know me well enough to be sure that I shall not change my mind. Nor will he. And, therefore, you may go down to Loughton with a pure conscience as far as I am concerned."

Phineas had his interview with the Earl, and in ten minutes everything was settled. On his way to Portman Square there had come across his mind the idea of a grand effort of friendship. What if he could persuade the father so to conduct himself towards his son, that the son should consent to be a member for the borough? And he did say a word or two to this effect, setting forth that Lord Chiltern would condescend to become a legislator, if only his father would condescend to acknowledge his son's fitness for such work without any comments on the son's past life. But the Earl simply waived the subject away with his hand. He could be as obstinate as his son. Lady Laura had

been the Mercury between them on this subject, and Lady Laura had failed. He would not now consent to employ another Mercury. Very little,—hardly a word indeed,—was said between the Earl and Phineas about politics. Phineas was to be the Saulsby candidate at Loughton for the next election, and was to come to Saulsby with the Kennedys from Loughlinter,—either with the Kennedys or somewhat in advance of them. "I do not say that there will be no opposition," said the Earl, "but I expect none." He was very courteous,—nay, he was kind, feeling doubtless that his family owed a great debt of gratitude to the young man with whom he was conversing; but, nevertheless, there was not absent on his part a touch of that high condescension which, perhaps, might be thought to become the Earl, the Cabinet Minister, and the great borough patron. Phineas, who was sensitive, felt this and winced. He had never quite liked Lord Brentford, and could not bring himself to do so now in spite of the kindness which the Earl was showing him.

But he was very happy when he sat down to write to his father from the club. His father had told him that the money should be forthcoming for the election at Loughshane, if he resolved to stand, but that the chance of success would be very slight,—indeed that, in his opinion, there would be no chance of success. Nevertheless, his father had evidently believed, when writing, that Phineas would not abandon his seat without a useless and expensive contest. He now thanked his father with many expressions of gratitude,—declared his conviction that his father was right about Lord Tulla, and then, in the most modest language that he could use, went on to say that he had found another

borough open to him in England. He was going to stand for Loughton, with the assistance of Lord Brentford, and thought that the election would probably not cost him above a couple of hundred pounds at the outside. Then he wrote a very pretty note to Lord Tulla, thanking him for his former kindness, and telling the Irish Earl that it was not his intention to interfere with the borough of Loughshane at the next election.

A few days after this Phineas was very much surprised at a visit that was made to him at his lodgings. Mr. Clarkson, after that scene in the lobby of the House, called again in Great Marlborough Street,—and was admitted. "You had better let him sit in your arm-chair for half an hour or so," Fitzgibbon had said; and Phineas almost believed that it would be better. The man was a terrible nuisance to him, and he was beginning to think that he had better undertake to pay the debt by degrees. It was, he knew, quite on the cards that Mr. Clarkson should have him arrested while at Saulsby. Since that scene in the lobby Mr. Clarkson had been with him twice, and there had been a preliminary conversation as to real payment. Mr. Clarkson wanted a hundred pounds down, and another bill for two hundred and twenty at three months' date. "Think of my time and trouble in coming here," Mr. Clarkson had urged when Phineas had objected to these terms. "Think of my time and trouble, and do be punctual, Mr. Finn." Phineas had offered him ten pounds a quarter, the payments to be marked on the back of the bill, a tender which Mr. Clarkson had not seemed to regard as strong evidence of punctuality. He had not been angry, but had simply expressed his intention of calling again,—giving Phineas to under-

stand that business would probably take him to the west of Ireland in the autumn. If only business might not take him down either to Loughlinter or to Saulsby! But the strange visitor who came to Phineas in the midst of these troubles put an end to them all.

The strange visitor was Miss Aspasia Fitzgibbon. "You 'll be very much surprised at my coming to your chambers, no doubt," she said, as she sat down in the chair which Phineas placed for her. Phineas could only say that he was very proud to be so highly honoured, and that he hoped she was well. "Pretty well, I thank you. I have just come about a little business, Mr. Finn, and I hope you 'll excuse me."

"I 'm quite sure that there is no need for excuses," said Phineas.

"Laurence, when he hears about it, will say that I 've been an impertinent old fool; but I never care what Laurence says, either this way or that. I 've been to that Mr. Clarkson, Mr. Finn, and I 've paid him the money."

"No!" said Phineas.

"But I have, Mr. Finn. I happened to hear what occurred that night at the door of the House of Commons."

"Who told you, Miss Fitzgibbon?"

"Never mind who told me. I heard it. I knew before that you had been foolish enough to help Laurence about money, and so I put two and two together. It is n't the first time I have had to do with Mr. Clarkson. So I sent to him, and I 've bought the bill. There it is." And Miss Fitzgibbon produced the document which bore the name of Phineas Finn across the front of it.

"And did you pay him two hundred and fifty pounds for it?"

"Not quite. I had a very hard tussle, and got it at last for two hundred and twenty pounds."

"And did you do it yourself?"

"All myself. If I had employed a lawyer I should have had to pay two hundred and forty pounds and five pounds for costs. And now, Mr. Finn, I hope you won't have any more money engagements with my brother Laurence." Phineas said that he thought he might promise that he would have no more. "Because, if you do, I shan't interfere. If Laurence began to find that he could get money out of me in that way, there would be no end to it. Mr. Clarkson would very soon be spending his spare time in my drawing-room. Good-bye, Mr. Finn. If Laurence says anything, just tell him that he 'd better come to me." Then Phineas was left looking at the bill. It was certainly a great relief to him,—that he should be thus secured from the domiciliary visits of Mr. Clarkson; a great relief to him to be assured that Mr. Clarkson would not find him out down at Loughton; but, nevertheless, he had to suffer a pang of shame as he felt that Miss Fitzgibbon had become acquainted with his poverty and had found herself obliged to satisfy his pecuniary liabilities.

CHAPTER VII.

LADY LAURA KENNEDY'S HEADACHE.

PHINEAS went down to Loughlinter early in July, taking Loughton in his way. He stayed there one night at the inn, and was introduced to sundry influential inhabitants of the borough by Mr. Grating, the ironmonger, who was known by those who knew Loughton to be a very strong supporter of the Earl's interest. Mr. Grating and about half-a-dozen others of the tradesmen of the town came to the inn, and met Phineas in the parlour. He told them he was a good sound liberal and a supporter of Mr. Mildmay's Government, of which their neighbour the Earl was so conspicuous an ornament. This was almost all that was said about the Earl out loud; but each individual man of Loughton then present took an opportunity during the meeting of whispering into Mr. Finn's ear a word or two to show that he also was admitted to the secret councils of the borough,—that he too could see the inside of the arrangement. "Of course we must support the Earl," one said. "Never mind what you hear about a tory candidate, Mr. Finn," whispered a second; the Earl can do what he pleases here. And it seemed to Phineas that it was thought by them all to be rather a fine thing to be thus held in the hand by an English nobleman. Phineas could not but reflect much upon this as he lay in his bed at the Loughton inn. The great political question on which the political world was en-

grossed up in London was the enfranchisement of Englishmen,—of Englishmen down to the rank of artisans and labourers;—and yet when he found himself in contact with individual Englishmen, with men even very much above the artisan and the labourer, he found that they rather liked being bound hand and foot, and being kept as tools in the political pocket of a rich man. Every one of those Loughton tradesmen was proud of his own personal subjection to the Earl!

From Loughton he went to Loughlinter, having promised to be back in the borough for the election. Mr. Grating would propose him, and he was to be seconded by Mr. Shortribs, the butcher and grazier. Mention had been made of a conservative candidate, and Mr. Shortribs had seemed to think that a good stand-up fight upon English principles, with a clear understanding, of course, that victory should prevail on the liberal side, would be a good thing for the borough. But the Earl's man of business saw Phineas on the morning of his departure, and told him not to regard Mr. Shortribs. "They 'd all like it," said the man of business; "and I dare say they 'll have enough of it when this Reform Bill is passed; but at present no one will be fool enough to come and spend his money here. We have them all in hand too well for that, Mr. Finn!"

He found the great house at Loughlinter nearly empty. Mr. Kennedy's mother was there, and Lord Brentford was there, and Lord Brentford's private secretary, and Mr. Kennedy's private secretary. At present that was the entire party. Lady Baldock was expected there, with her daughter and Violet Effingham; but, as well as Phineas could learn, they would not be

at Loughlinter until after he had left it. There had come up lately a rumour that there would be an autumn session—that the Houses would sit through October and a part of November, in order that Mr. Mildmay might try the feeling of the new Parliament. If this were to be so, Phineas had resolved that, in the event of his election at Loughton, he would not return to Ireland till after this autumn session should be over. He gave an account to the Earl, in the presence of the Earl's son-in-law, of what had taken place at Loughton, and the Earl expressed himself as satisfied. It was manifestly a great satisfaction to Lord Brentford that he should still have a borough in his pocket, and the more so because there were so very few noblemen left who had such property belonging to them. He was very careful in his speech, never saying in so many words that the privilege of returning a member was his own; but his meaning was not the less clear.

Those were dreary days at Loughlinter. There was fishing,—if Phineas chose to fish; and he was told that he could shoot a deer if he was minded to go out alone. But it seemed as though it were the intention of the host that his guests should spend their time profitably. Mr. Kennedy himself was shut up with books and papers all the morning, and always took up a book after dinner. The Earl also would read a little,—and then would sleep a good deal. Old Mrs. Kennedy slept also, and Lady Laura looked as though she would like to sleep if it were not that her husband's eye was upon her. As it was, she administered tea, Mr. Kennedy not liking the practice of having it handed round by a servant when none were there but members of the family circle, and she read novels. Phineas got hold

of a stiff bit of reading for himself, and tried to utilise his time. He took Alison in hand, and worked his way gallantly through a couple of volumes. But even he, more than once or twice, found himself on the very verge of slumber. Then he would wake up and try to think about things. Why was he, Phineas Finn, an Irishman from Killaloe, living in that great house of Loughlinter as though he were one of the family, striving to kill the hours, and feeling that he was in some way subject to the dominion of his host? Would it not be better for him to get up and go away? In his heart of hearts he did not like Mr. Kennedy, though he believed him to be a good man. And of what service to him was it to like Lady Laura, now that Lady Laura was a possession in the hands of Mr. Kennedy? Then he would tell himself that he owed his position in the world entirely to Lady Laura, and that he was ungrateful to feel himself ever dull in her society. And, moreover, there was something to be done in the world beyond making love and being merry. Mr. Kennedy could occupy himself with a blue book for hours together without wincing. So Phineas went to work again with his Alison, and read away till he nodded.

In those days he often wandered up and down the Linter and across the moor to the Linn, and so down to the lake. He would take a book with him, and would seat himself down on spots which he loved, and would pretend to read;—but I do not think that he got much advantage from his book. He was thinking of his life, and trying to calculate whether the wonderful success which he had achieved would ever be of permanent value to him. Would he be nearer to earning his bread when he should be member for Loughton

than he had been when he was member for Loughshane? Or was there before him any slightest probability that he would ever earn his bread? And then he thought of Violet Effingham, and was angry with himself for remembering at that moment that Violet Effingham was the mistress of a large fortune.

Once before when he was sitting beside the Linter he had made up his mind to declare his passion to Lady Laura;—and he had done so on the very spot. Now, within a twelvemonth of that time, he made up his mind on the same spot to declare his passion to Miss Effingham, and he thought his best mode of carrying his suit would be to secure the assistance of Lady Laura. Lady Laura, no doubt, had been very anxious that her brother should marry Violet; but Lord Chiltern, as Phineas knew, had asked for Violet's hand twice in vain; and, moreover, Chiltern himself had declared to Phineas that he would never ask for it again. Lady Laura, who was always reasonable, would surely perceive that there was no hope of success for her brother. That Chiltern would quarrel with him,—would quarrel with him to the knife,—he did not doubt; but he felt that no fear of such a quarrel as that should deter him. He loved Violet Effingham, and he must indeed be pusillanimous if, loving her as he did, he was deterred from expressing his love from any fear of a suitor whom she did not favour. He would not willingly be untrue to his friendship for Lady Laura's brother. Had there been a chance for Lord Chiltern he would have abstained from putting himself forward. But what was the use of his abstaining, when by doing so he could in no wise benefit his friend,—when the result of his doing so would be that some interloper

would come in and carry off the prize? He would explain all this to Lady Laura, and, if the prize would be kind to him, he would disregard the anger of Lord Chiltern, even though it might be anger to the knife.

As he was thinking of all this Lady Laura stood before him where he was sitting at the top of the falls. At this moment he remembered well all the circumstances of the scene when he had been there with her at his last visit to Loughlinter. How things had changed since then! Then he had loved Lady Laura with all his heart, and he had now already brought himself to regard her as a discreet matron whom to love would be almost as unreasonable as though he were to entertain a passion for the Lord Chancellor. The reader will understand how thorough had been the cure effected by Lady Laura's marriage and the interval of a few months, when the swain was already prepared to make this lady the depositary of his confidence in another matter of love. "You are often here, I suppose?" said Lady Laura, looking down upon him as he sat upon the rock.

"Well;—yes; not very often; I come here sometimes because the view down upon the lake is so fine."

"It is the prettiest spot about the place. I hardly ever get here now. Indeed this is only the second time that I have been up since we have been at home, and then I came to bring papa here." There was a little wooden seat near to the rock upon which Phineas had been lying, and upon this Lady Laura sat down. Phineas, with his eyes turned upon the lake, was considering how he might introduce the subject of his love for Violet Effingham; but he did not find the matter very easy. He had just resolved to begin by saying

that Violet would certainly never accept Lord Chiltern, when Lady Laura spoke a word or two which stopped him altogether. "How well I remember," she said, "the day when you and I were here last autumn!"

"So do I. You told me then that you were going to marry Mr. Kennedy. How much has happened since then!"

"Much indeed! Enough for a whole lifetime. And yet how slow the time has gone!"

"I do not think it has been slow with me," said Phineas.

"No; you have been active. You have had your hands full of work. I am beginning to think that it is a great curse to have been born a woman."

"And yet I have heard you say that a woman may do as much as a man."

"That was before I had learned my lesson properly. I know better than that now. Oh dear! I have no doubt it is all for the best as it is, but I have a kind of wish that I might be allowed to go out and milk the cows."

"And may you not milk the cows if you wish it, Lady Laura?"

"By no means;—not only not milk them, but hardly look at them. At any rate, I must not talk about them." Phineas of course understood that she was complaining of her husband, and hardly knew how to reply to her. He had been sharp enough to perceive already that Mr. Kennedy was an autocrat in his own house, and he knew Lady Laura well enough to be sure that such masterdom would be very irksome to her. But he had not imagined that she would complain to him. "It was so different at Saulsby," Lady

Laura continued. "Everything there seemed to be my own."

"And everything here is your own."

"Yes,—according to the prayer-book. And everything in truth is my own,—as all the dainties at the banquet belonged to Sancho the Governor."

"You mean," said he,—and then he hesitated; "you mean that Mr. Kennedy stands over you, guarding you for your own welfare, as the doctor stood over Sancho and guarded him?"

There was a pause before she answered,—a long pause, during which he was looking away over the lake, and thinking how he might introduce the subject of his love. But long as was the pause, he had not begun when Lady Laura was again speaking. "The truth is, my friend," she said, "that I have made a mistake."

"A mistake?"

"Yes, Phineas, a mistake. I have blundered as fools blunder, thinking that I was clever enough to pick my footsteps aright without asking counsel from any one. I have blundered and stumbled and fallen, and now I am so bruised that I am not able to stand upon my feet." The word that struck him most in all this was his own Christian name. She had never called him Phineas before. He was aware that the circle of his acquaintance had fallen into a way of miscalling him by his Christian name, as one observes to be done now and again in reference to some special young man. Most of the men whom he called his friends called him Phineas. Even the Earl had done so more than once on occasions in which the greatness of his position had dropped for a moment out of his mind. Mrs. Low had called him Phineas when she regarded him as her

husband's most cherished pupil; and Mrs. Bunce had called him Mr. Phineas. He had always been Phineas to everybody at Killaloe. But still he was quite sure that Lady Laura had never so called him before. Nor would she have done so now in her husband's presence. He was sure of that also.

"You mean that you are unhappy?" he said, still looking away from her towards the lake.

"Yes, I do mean that. Though I do not know why I should come and tell you so,—except that I am still blundering and stumbling, and have fallen into a way of hurting myself at every step."

"You can tell no one who is more anxious for your happiness," said Phineas.

"That is a very pretty speech, but what would you do for my happiness? Indeed, what is it possible that you should do? I mean it as no rebuke when I say that my happiness or unhappiness is a matter as to which you will soon become perfectly indifferent."

"Why should you say so, Lady Laura?"

"Because it is natural that it should be so. You and Mr. Kennedy might have been friends. Not that you will be, because you are unlike each other in all your ways. But it might have been so."

"And are not you and I to be friends?" he asked.

"No. In a very few months you will not think of telling me what are your desires or what your sorrows; —and as for me, it will be out of the question that I should tell mine to you. How can you be my friend?"

"If you were not quite sure of my friendship, Lady Laura, you would not speak to me as you are speaking now." Still he did not look at her, but lay with his face supported on his hands, and his eyes turned away upon

the lake. But she, where she was sitting, could see him, and was aided by her sight in making comparisons in her mind between the two men who had been her lovers,—between him whom she had taken and him whom she had left. There was something in the hard, dry, unsympathising, unchanging virtues of her husband which almost revolted her. He had not a fault, but she had tried him at every point and had been able to strike no spark of fire from him. Even by disobeying she could produce no heat,—only an access of firmness. How would it have been with her had she thrown all ideas of fortune to the winds, and linked her lot to that of the young Phœbus who was lying at her feet? If she had ever loved any one she had loved him. And she had not thrown away her love for money. So she swore to herself over and over again, trying to console herself in her cold unhappiness. She had married a rich man in order that she might be able to do something in the world;—and now that she was this rich man's wife she found that she could do nothing. The rich man thought it to be quite enough for her to sit at home and look after his welfare. In the meantime young Phœbus,—her Phœbus as he had been once,—was thinking altogether of some one else.

"Phineas," she said slowly, "I have in you such perfect confidence that I will tell you the truth;—as one man may tell it to another. I wish you would go from here."

"What, at once?"

"Not to-day, or to-morrow. Stay here now till the election; but do not return. He will ask you to come, and press you hard, and will be hurt;—for, strange to say, with all his coldness, he really likes you. He has

a pleasure in seeing you here. But he must not have that pleasure at the expense of trouble to me."

"And why is it a trouble to you?" he asked. Men are such fools;—so awkward, so unready, with their wits ever behind the occasion by a dozen seconds or so! As soon as the words were uttered, he knew that they should not have been spoken.

"Because I am a fool," she said. "Why else? Is not that enough for you?"

"Laura——" he said.

"No,—no; I will have none of that. I am a fool, but not such a fool as to suppose that any cure is to be found there."

"Only say what I can do for you, though it be with my entire life, and I will do it."

"You can do nothing,—except to keep away from me."

"Are you earnest in telling me that?" Now at last he had turned himself round and was looking at her, and as he looked he saw the hat of a man appearing up the path, and immediately afterwards the face. It was the hat and face of the Laird of Loughlinter. "Here is Mr. Kennedy," said Phineas, in a tone of voice not devoid of dismay and trouble.

"So I perceive," said Lady Laura. But there was no dismay or trouble in the tone of her voice.

In the countenance of Mr. Kennedy, as he approached closer, there was not much to be read,—only, perhaps, some slight addition of gloom, or rather, perhaps, of that frigid propriety of moral demeanour for which he had always been conspicuous, which had grown upon him at his marriage, and which had been greatly increased by the double action of being made

a Cabinet Minister and being garrotted. "I am glad that your headache is better," he said to his wife, who had risen from her seat to meet him. Phineas also had risen, and was now looking somewhat sheepish where he stood.

"I came out because it was worse," she said. "It irritated me so that I could not stand the house any longer."

"I will send to Callender for Dr. Macnuthrie."

"Pray do nothing of the kind, Robert. I do not want Dr. Macnuthrie at all."

"Where there is illness, medical advice is always expedient."

"I am not ill. A headache is not illness."

"I had thought it was," said Mr. Kennedy, very drily.

"At any rate, I would rather not have Dr. Macnuthrie."

"I am sure it cannot do you any good to climb up here in the heat of the sun. Had you been here long, Finn?"

"All the morning;—here, or hereabouts. I clambered up from the lake and had a book in my pocket."

"And you happened to come across him by accident?" Mr. Kennedy asked. There was something so simple in the question that its very simplicity proved that there was no suspicion.

"Yes;—by chance," said Lady Laura. "But every one at Loughlinter always comes up here. If any one ever were missing whom I wanted to find, this is where I should look."

"I am going on towards Linter forest to meet Blane," said Mr. Kennedy. Blane was the game-

keeper. "If you don't mind the trouble, Finn, I wish you 'd take Lady Laura down to the house. Do not let her stay out in the heat. I will take care that somebody goes over to Callender for Dr. Macnuthrie." Then Mr. Kennedy went on, and Phineas was left with the charge of taking Lady Laura back to the house. When Mr. Kennedy's hat had first appeared coming up the walk, Phineas had been ready to proclaim himself prepared for any devotion in the service of Lady Laura. Indeed, he had begun to reply with criminal tenderness to the indiscreet avowal which Lady Laura had made to him. But he felt now, after what had just occurred in the husband's presence, that any show of tenderness,—of criminal tenderness,—was impossible. The absence of all suspicion on the part of Mr. Kennedy had made Phineas feel that he was bound by all social laws to refrain from such tenderness. Lady Laura began to descend the path before him without a word;—and went on, and on, as though she would have reached the house without speaking, had he not addressed her. "Does your head still pain you?" he asked.

"Of course it does."

"I suppose he is right in saying that you should not be out in the heat."

"I do not know. It is not worth while to think about that. He sends me in, and so of course I must go. And he tells you to take me, and so of course you must take me."

"Would you wish that I should let you go alone?"

"Yes, I would. Only he will be sure to find it out; and you must not tell him that you left me at my request."

"Do you think that I am afraid of him?" said Phineas.

"Yes;—I think you are. I know that I am, and that papa is; and that his mother hardly dares to call her soul her own. I do not know why you should escape."

"Mr. Kennedy is nothing to me."

"He is something to me, and so I suppose I had better go on. And now I shall have that horrid man from the little town pawing me and covering everything with snuff, and bidding me take Scotch physic,—which seems to increase in quantity and nastiness as doses in England decrease. And he will stand over me to see that I take it."

"What;—the doctor from Callender?"

"No;—but Mr. Kennedy will. If he advised me to have a hole in my glove mended, he would ask me before he went to bed whether it was done. He never forgot anything in his life, and was never unmindful of anything. That I think will do, Mr. Finn. You have brought me out from the trees, and that may be taken as bringing me home. We shall hardly get scolded if we part here. Remember what I told you up above. And remember also that it is in your power to do nothing else for me. Good-bye." So he turned away towards the lake, and let Lady Laura go across the wide lawn to the house by herself.

He had failed altogether in his intention of telling his friend of his love for Violet, and had come to perceive that he could not for the present carry out that intention. After what had passed it would be impossible for him to go to Lady Laura with a passionate tale of his longing for Violet Effingham. If he were

even to speak to her of love at all, it must be quite of another love than that. But he never would speak to her of love; nor,—as he felt quite sure,—would she allow him to do so. But what astounded him most as he thought of the interview which had just passed, was the fact that the Lady Laura whom he had known,—whom he had thought he had known,—should have become so subject to such a man as Mr. Kennedy, a man whom he had despised as being weak, irresolute, and without a purpose! For the day or two that he remained at Loughlinter, he watched the family closely, and became aware that Lady Laura had been right when she declared that her father was afraid of Mr. Kennedy.

"I shall follow you almost immediately," said the Earl confidentially to Phineas, when the candidate for the borough took his departure from Loughlinter. "I don't like to be there just when the election is going on, but I 'll be at Saulsby to receive you the day afterwards."

Phineas took his leave from Mr. Kennedy, with a warm expression of friendship on the part of his host, and from Lady Laura with a mere touch of the hand. He tried to say a word; but she was sullen, or, if not, she put on some mood like to sullenness, and said never a word to him.

On the day after the departure of Phineas Finn for Loughton Lady Laura Kennedy still had a headache. She had complained of a headache ever since she had been at Loughlinter, and Dr. Macnuthrie had been over more than once. "I wonder what it is that ails you," said her husband, standing over her in her own sitting-room upstairs. It was a pretty room, looking

away to the mountains, with just a glimpse of the lake to be caught from the window, and it had been prepared for her with all the skill and taste of an accomplished upholsterer. She had selected the room for herself soon after her engagement, and had thanked her future husband with her sweetest smile for giving her the choice. She had thanked him and told him that she always meant to be happy,—so happy in that room! He was a man not much given to romance, but he thought of this promise as he stood over her and asked after her health. As far as he could see she had never been even comfortable since she had been at Loughlinter. A shadow of the truth came across his mind. Perhaps his wife was bored. If so, what was to be the future of his life and of hers? He went up to London every year, and to Parliament, as a duty; and then, during some period of the recess, would have his house full of guests,—as another duty. But his happiness was to consist in such hours as these which seemed to inflict upon his wife the penalty of a continual headache. A shadow of the truth came upon him. What if his wife did not like living quietly at home as the mistress of her husband's house? What if a headache was always to be the result of a simple performance of domestic duties?

More than a shadow of truth had come upon Lady Laura herself. The dark cloud created by the entire truth was upon her, making everything black and wretched around her. She had asked herself a question or two, and had discovered that she had no love for her husband, that the kind of life which he intended to exact from her was insupportable to her, and that she had blundered and fallen in her entrance

upon life. She perceived that her father had already become weary of Mr. Kennedy, and that, lonely and sad as he would be at Saulsby by himself, it was his intention to repudiate the idea of making a home at Loughlinter. Yes;—she would be deserted by every one, except of course by her husband; and then—— Then she would throw herself on some early morning into the lake, for life would be insupportable.

"I wonder what it is that ails you," said Mr. Kennedy.

"Nothing serious. One can't always help having a headache, you know."

"I don't think you take enough exercise, Laura. I would propose that you should walk four miles every day after breakfast. I will always be ready to accompany you. I have spoken to Dr. Macnuthrie——"

"I hate Dr. Macnuthrie."

"Why should you hate Dr. Macnuthrie, Laura?"

"How can I tell why? I do. That is quite reason enough why you should not send for him to me."

"You are unreasonable, Laura. One chooses a doctor on account of his reputation in his profession, and that of Dr. Macnuthrie stands high."

"I do not want any doctor."

"But if you are ill, my dear——"

"I am not ill."

"But you said you had a headache. You have said so for the last ten days."

"Having a headache is not being ill. I only wish you would not talk of it, and then perhaps I should get rid of it."

"I cannot believe that. Headache in nine cases out of ten comes from the stomach." Though he

said this,—saying it because it was the commonplace common-sense sort of thing to say, still at the very moment there was the shadow of the truth before his eyes. What if this headache meant simple dislike to him, and to his modes of life?

"It is nothing of that sort," said Lady Laura, impatient at having her ailment inquired into with so much accuracy.

"Then what is it? You cannot think that I can be happy to hear you complaining of headache every day,—making it an excuse for absolute idleness."

"What is it that you want me to do?" she said, jumping up from her seat. "Set me a task, and if I don't go mad over it, I 'll get through it. There are the account books. Give them to me. I don't suppose I can see the figures, but I 'll try to see them."

"Laura, this is unkind of you,—and ungrateful."

"Of course;—it is everything that is bad. What a pity that you did not find it out last year! Oh dear, oh dear! what am I to do?" Then she threw herself down upon the sofa, and put both her hands up to her temples.

"I will send for Dr. Macnuthrie at once," said Mr. Kennedy, walking towards the door very slowly, and speaking as slowly as he walked.

"No;—do no such thing," she said, springing to her feet again and intercepting him before he reached the door. "If he comes I will not see him. I give you my word that I will not speak to him if he comes. You do not understand," she said; "you do not understand at all."

"What is it that I ought to understand?" he asked.

"That a woman does not like to be bothered."

He made no reply at once, but stood there twisting the handle of the door, and collecting his thoughts. "Yes," said he at last; "I am beginning to find that out;—and to find out also what it is that bothers a woman, as you call it. I can see now what it is that makes your head ache. It is not the stomach. You are quite right there. It is the prospect of a quiet decent life, to which would be attached the performance of certain homely duties. Dr. Macnuthrie is a learned man, but I doubt whether he can do anything for such a malady."

"You are quite right, Robert; he can do nothing."

"It is a malady you must cure for yourself, Laura;—and which is to be cured by perseverance. If you can bring yourself to try——"

"But I cannot bring myself to try at all," she said.

"Do you mean to tell me, Laura, that you will make no effort to do your duty as my wife?"

"I mean to tell you that I will not try to cure a headache by doing sums. That is all that I mean to say at this moment. If you will leave me for a while, so that I may lie down, perhaps I shall be able to come to dinner." He still hesitated, standing with the door in his hand. "But if you go on scolding me," she continued, "what I shall do is to go to bed directly you go away." He hesitated for a moment longer, and then left the room without another word.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. SLIDE'S GRIEVANCE.

Our hero was elected member for Loughton without any trouble to him or, as far as he could see, to any one else. He made one speech from a small raised booth that was called a platform, and that was all that he was called upon to do. Mr. Grating made a speech in proposing him, and Mr. Shortribs another in seconding him; and these were all the speeches that were required. The thing seemed to be so very easy that he was afterwards almost offended when he was told that the bill for so insignificant a piece of work came to £247 13s. 9d. He had seen no occasion for spending even the odd forty-seven pounds. But then he was member for Loughton; and as he passed the evening alone at the inn, having dined in company with Messrs. Grating, Shortribs, and sundry other influential electors, he began to reflect that, after all, it was not so very great a thing to be a member of Parliament. It almost seemed that that which had come to him so easily could not be of much value.

On the following day he went to the castle, and was there when the Earl arrived. They two were alone together, and the Earl was very kind to him. "So you had no opponent after all," said the great man of Loughton, with a slight smile.

"Not the ghost of another candidate."

"I did not think there would be. They have tried

it once or twice and have always failed. There are only one or two in the place who like to go one way just because their neighbours go the other. But, in truth, there is no conservative feeling in the place!"

Phineas, although he was at the present moment the member for Loughton himself, could not but enjoy the joke of this. Could there be any liberal feeling in such a place, or, indeed, any political feeling whatsoever? Would not Messrs. Grating and Shortribs have done just the same had it happened that Lord Brentford had been a tory peer? "They all seemed to be very obliging," said Phineas, in answer to the Earl.

"Yes, they are. There is n't a house in the town, you know, let for longer than seven years, and most of them merely from year to year. And, do you know, I have n't a farmer on the property with a lease,—not one; and they don't want leases. They know they 're safe. But I do like the people round me to be of the same way of thinking as myself about politics."

On the second day after dinner,—the last evening of Finn's visit to Saulsby,—the Earl fell suddenly into a confidential conversation about his daughter and his son, and about Violet Effingham. So sudden, indeed, and so confidential was the conversation, that Phineas was almost silenced for a while. A word or two had been said about Loughlinter, of the beauty of the place and of the vastness of the property. "I am almost afraid," said Lord Brentford, "that Laura is not happy there."

"I hope she is," said Phineas.

"He is so hard and dry, and what I call exacting. That is just the word for it. Now Laura has never been used to that. With me she always had her own

way in everything, and I always found her fit to have it. I do not understand why her husband should treat her differently."

"Perhaps it is the temper of the man."

"Temper, yes; but what a bad prospect is that for her! And she, too, has a temper, and so he will find if he tries her too far. I cannot stand Loughlinter. I told Laura so fairly. It is one of those houses in which a man cannot call his hours his own. I told Laura that I could not undertake to remain there for above a day or two."

"It is very sad," said Phineas.

"Yes, indeed; it is sad for her, poor girl; and very sad for me too. I have no one else but Laura, —literally no one; and now I am divided from her! It seems that she has been taken as much away from me as though her husband lived in China. I have lost them both now!"

"I hope not, my lord."

"I say I have. As to Chiltern, I can perceive that he becomes more and more indifferent to me every day. He thinks of me only as a man in his way who must die some day and may die soon."

"You wrong him, Lord Brentford."

"I do not wrong him at all. Why has he answered every offer I have made him with so much insolence as to make it impossible for me to put myself into further communion with him?"

"He thinks that you have wronged him."

"Yes;—because I have been unable to shut my eyes to his mode of living. I was to go on paying his debts, and taking no other notice whatsoever of his conduct!"

"I do not think he is in debt now."

"Because his sister the other day spent every shilling of her fortune in paying them. She gave him £40,000! Do you think she would have married Kennedy but for that? I don't. I could not prevent her. I had said that I would not cripple my remaining years of life by raising the money, and I could not go back from my word."

"You and Chiltern might raise the money between you."

"It would do no good now. She has married Mr. Kennedy, and the money is nothing to her or to him. Chiltern might have put things right by marrying Miss Effingham if he pleased."

"I think he did his best there."

"No;—he did his worst. He asked her to be his wife as a man asks for a railway-ticket or a pair of gloves, which he buys with a price; and because she would not jump into his mouth he gave it up. I don't believe he even really wanted to marry her. I suppose he has some disreputable connection to prevent it."

"Nothing of the kind. He would marry her to-morrow if he could. My belief is that Miss Effingham is sincere in refusing him."

"I don't doubt her sincerity."

"And that she will never change."

"Ah, well; I don't agree with you, and I dare say I know them both better than you do. But everything goes against me. I had set my heart upon it, and therefore of course I shall be disappointed. What is he going to do this autumn?"

"He is yachting now."

"And who are with him?"

"I think the boat belongs to Captain Colepepper."

"The greatest blackguard in all England! A man who shoots pigeons and rides steeple-chases! And the worst of Chiltern is this, that even if he did n't like the man, and if he were tired of this sort of life, he would go on just the same because he thinks it a fine thing not to give way." This was so true that Phineas did not dare to contradict the statement, and therefore said nothing. "I had some faint hope," continued the Earl, "while Laura could always watch him; because, in his way, he was fond of his sister. But that is all over now. She will have enough to do to watch herself!"

Phineas had felt that the Earl had put him down rather sharply when he had said that Violet would never accept Lord Chiltern, and he was therefore not a little surprised when Lord Brentford spoke again of Miss Effingham the following morning, holding in his hand a letter which he had just received from her. "They are to be at Loughlinter on the 10th," he said, "and she purposes to come here for a couple of nights on her way."

"Lady Baldock and all?"

"Well, yes; Lady Baldock and all. I am not very fond of Lady Baldock, but I will put up with her for a couple of days for the sake of having Violet. She is more like a child of my own now than anybody else. I shall not see her all the autumn afterwards. I cannot stand Loughlinter."

"It will be better when the house is full."

"You will be there, I suppose?"

"Well, no; I think not," said Phineas.

"You have had enough of it, have you?" Phineas

made no reply to this, but smiled slightly. "By Jove, I don't wonder at it," said the Earl. Phineas, who would have given all he had in the world to be staying in the same country house with Violet Effingham, could not explain how it had come to pass that he was obliged to absent himself. "I suppose you were asked?" said the Earl.

"Oh yes, I was asked. Nothing can be kinder than they are."

"Kennedy told me that you were coming as a matter of course."

"I explained to him after that," said Phineas, "that I should not return. I shall go over to Ireland. I have a deal of hard reading to do, and I can get through it there without interruption."

He went up from Saulsby to London on that day, and found himself quite alone in Mrs. Bunce's lodgings. I mean not only that he was alone at his lodgings, but he was alone at his club, and alone in the streets. July was not quite over, and yet all the birds of passage had migrated. Mr. Mildmay, by his short session, had half ruined the London tradesmen, and had changed the summer mode of life of all those who account themselves to be anybody. Phineas, as he sat alone in his room, felt himself to be nobody. He had told the Earl that he was going to Ireland, and to Ireland he must go;—because he had nothing else to do. He had been asked indeed to join one or two parties in their autumn plans. Mr. Monk had wanted him to go to the Pyrenees, and Lord Chiltern had suggested that he should join the yacht;—but neither plan suited him. It would have suited him to be at Loughlinter with Violet Effingham, but Loughlinter was a barred house

to him. His old friend, Lady Laura, had told him not to come thither, explaining, with sufficient clearness, her reasons for excluding him from the number of her husband's guests. As he thought of it the past scenes of his life became very marvellous to him. Twelve months since he would have given all the world for a word of love from Lady Laura, and had barely dared to hope that such a word, at some future day, might possibly be spoken. Now such a word had in truth been spoken, and it had come to be simply a trouble to him. She had owned to him,—for, in truth, such had been the meaning of her warning to him,—that, though she had married another man, she had loved and did love him. But in thinking of this he took no pride in it. It was not till he had thought of it long that he began to ask himself whether he might not be justified in gathering from what happened some hope that Violet also might learn to love him. He had thought so little of himself as to have been afraid at first to press his suit with Lady Laura. Might he not venture to think more of himself, having learned how far he had succeeded ?

But how was he to get at Violet Effingham ? From the moment at which he had left Saulsby he had been angry with himself for not having asked Lord Brentford to allow him to remain there till after the Baldock party should have gone on to Loughlinter. The Earl, who was very lonely in his house, would have consented at once. Phineas, indeed, was driven to confess to himself that success with Violet would at once have put an end to all his friendship with Lord Brentford;—as also to all his friendship with Lord Chiltern. He would, in such case, be bound in honour

to vacate his seat and give back Loughton to his offended patron. But he would have given up much more than his seat for Violet Effingham! At present, however, he had no means of getting at her to ask her the question. He could hardly go to Loughlinter in opposition to the wishes of Lady Laura.

A little adventure happened to him in London which somewhat relieved the dulness of the days of the first week in August. He remained in London till the middle of August, half resolving to rush down to Saulsby when Violet Effingham should be there,—endeavouring to find some excuse for such a proceeding, but racking his brains in vain,—and then there came about his little adventure. The adventure was commenced by the receipt of the following letter:

"Banner of the People Office,
"3rd August, 186—.

"My dear Finn,—I must say I think you have treated me badly, and without that sort of brotherly fairness which we on the public press expect from one another. However, perhaps we can come to an understanding, and if so, things may yet go smoothly. Give me a turn and I am not at all adverse to give you one. Will you come to me here, or shall I call upon you?

"Yours always, Q. S."

Phineas was not only surprised, but disgusted also, at the receipt of this letter. He could not imagine what was the deed by which he had offended Mr. Slide. He thought over all the circumstances of his short connection with the People's Banner, but could remember nothing which might have created offence. But his disgust was greater than his surprise. He thought that

he had done nothing and said nothing to justify Quintus Slide in calling him "dear Finn." He, who had Lady Laura's secret in his keeping; he who had hoped to be the possessor of Violet Effingham's affections,—he to be called "dear Finn" by such a one as Quintus Slide! He soon made up his mind that he would not answer the note, but would go at once to the People's Banner office at the hour at which Quintus Slide was always there. He certainly would not write to "dear Slide;" and, until he had heard something more of this cause of offence, he would not make an enemy forever by calling the man "dear Sir." He went to the office of the People's Banner, and found Mr. Slide ensconced in a little glass cupboard, writing an article for the next day's copy.

"I suppose you 're very busy," said Phineas, inserting himself with some difficulty on to a little stool in the corner of the cupboard.

"Not so particular but what I 'm glad to see you. You shoot, don't you?"

"Shoot!" said Phineas. It could not be possible that Mr. Slide was intending, after this abrupt fashion, to propose a duel with pistols.

"Grouse and pheasants, and them sort of things?" asked Mr. Slide.

"Oh, ah; I understand. Yes, I shoot sometimes."

"Is it the 12th or 20th for grouse in Scotland?"

"The 12th," said Phineas. "What makes you ask that just now?"

"I 'm doing a letter about it,—advising men not to shoot too many of the young birds, and showing that they 'll have none next year if they do. I had a fellow here just now who knew all about it, and he put down

a lot; but I forgot to make him tell me the day of beginning. What 's a good place to date from?"

Phineas suggested Callender or Stirling.

"Stirling 's too much of a town, is n't it? Callender sounds better for game, I think."

So the letter which was to save the young grouse was dated from Callender; and Mr. Quintus Slide having written the word, threw down his pen, came off his stool, and rushed at once at his subject.

"Well, now, Finn," he said, "don't you know that you 've treated me badly about Loughton?"

"Treated you badly about Loughton!" Phineas, as he repeated the words, was quite in the dark as to Mr. Slide's meaning. Did Mr. Slide intend to convey a reproach because Phineas had not personally sent some tidings of the election to the People's Banner?

"Very badly," said Mr. Slide, with his arms akimbo, —"very badly indeed! Men on the press together do expect that they 're to be stuck by, and not thrown over. D—— it, I say; what 's the good of a brotherhood if it ain't to be brotherhood?"

"Upon my word, I don't know what you mean," said Phineas.

"Did n't I tell you that I had Loughton in my heye?" said Quintus.

"Oh—h!"

"It 's very well to say ho, and look guilty, but did n't I tell you?"

"I never heard such nonsense in my life."

"Nonsense?"

"How on earth could you have stood for Loughton? What interest would you have there? You could not even have found an elector to propose you."

"Now, I 'll tell you what I 'll do, Finn. I think you have thrown me over most shabby, but I won't stand about that. You shall have Loughton this session if you 'll promise to make way for me after the next election. If you 'll agree to that, we 'll have a special leader to say how well Lord What's-his-name has done with the borough; and we 'll be your horgan through the whole session."

"I never heard such nonsense in my life. In the first place, Loughton is safe to be in the schedule of reduced boroughs. It will be thrown into the county, or joined with a group."

"I 'll stand the chance of that. Will you agree?"

"Agree! No! It 's the most absurd proposal that was ever made. You might as well ask me whether I would agree that you should go to heaven. Go to heaven if you can, I should say. I have not the slightest objection. But it 's nothing to me."

"Very well," said Quintus Slide. "Very well! Now we understand each other, and that 's all that I desire. I think that I can show you what it is to come among gentlemen of the press, and then to throw them over. Good morning."

Phineas, quite satisfied at the result of the interview as regarded himself, and by no means sorry that there should have arisen a cause of separation between Mr. Quintus Slide and his "dear Finn," shook off a little dust from his foot as he left the office of the People's Banner, and resolved that in future he would attempt to make no connection in that direction. As he returned home he told himself that a member of Parliament should be altogether independent of the press. On the second morning after his meeting with his late

friend, he saw the result of his independence. There was a startling article, a tremendous article, showing the pressing necessity of immediate reform, and proving the necessity by an illustration of the borough-mongering rottenness of the present system. When such a patron as Lord Brentford,—himself a Cabinet Minister with a sinecure,—could by his mere word put into the House such a stick as Phineas Finn,—a man who had struggled to stand on his legs before the Speaker, but had wanted both the courage and the capacity, nothing further could surely be wanted to prove that the Reform Bill of 1832 required to be supplemented by some more energetic measure.

Phineas laughed as he read the article, and declared to himself that the joke was a good joke. But, nevertheless, he suffered. Mr. Quintus Slide, when he was really anxious to use his thong earnestly, could generally raise a wale.

CHAPTER IX.

WAS HE HONEST?

On the 10th of August, Phineas Finn did return to Loughton. He went down by the mail train on the night of the 10th, having telegraphed to the inn for a bed, and was up eating his breakfast in that hospitable house at nine o'clock. The landlord and landlady with all their staff were at a loss to imagine what had brought down their member again so quickly to his borough; but the reader, who will remember that Lady Baldock with her daughter and Violet Effingham were to pass the 11th of the month at Saulsby, may perhaps be able to make a guess on the subject.

Phineas had been thinking of making this sudden visit to Loughton ever since he had been up in town, but he could suggest to himself no reason to be given to Lord Brentford for his sudden reappearance. The Earl had been very kind to him, but he had said nothing which could justify his young friend in running in and out of Saulsby Castle at pleasure, without invitation and without notice. Phineas was so well aware of this himself that often as he had half resolved during the last ten days to return to Saulsby, so often had he determined that he could not do so. He could think of no excuse. Then the heavens favoured him, and he received a letter from Lord Chiltern, in which there was a message for Lord Brentford. "If you see

my father, tell him that I am ready at any moment to do what is necessary for raising the money for Laura." Taking this as his excuse he returned to Loughton.

As chance arranged it, he met the Earl standing on the great steps before his own castle doors. "What, Finn; is this you? I thought you were in Ireland."

"Not yet, my lord, as you see." Then he opened his budget at once, and blushed at his own hypocrisy as he went on with his story. He had, he said, felt the message from Chiltern to be so all-important that he could not bring himself to go over to Ireland without delivering it. He urged upon the Earl that he might learn from this how anxious Lord Chiltern was to effect a reconciliation. When it occurred to him, he said, that there might be a hope of doing anything towards such an object, he could not go to Ireland leaving the good work behind him. In love and war all things are fair. So he declared to himself; but as he did so he felt that his story was so weak that it would hardly gain for him an admittance into the castle. In this he was completely wrong. The Earl, swallowing the bait, put his arm through that of the intruder, and, walking with him through the paths of the shrubbery, at length confessed that he would be glad to be reconciled to his son if it were possible. "Let him come here, and she shall be here also," said the Earl, speaking of Violet. To this Phineas could say nothing out loud, but he told himself that all should be fair between them. He would take no dishonest advantage of Lord Chiltern. He would give Lord Chiltern the whole message as it was given to him by Lord Brentford. But should it so turn out that he himself got an opportunity of saying to Violet

all that he had come to say, and should it also turn out,—an event which he acknowledged to himself to be most unlikely,—that Violet did not reject him, then how could he write his letter to Lord Chiltern? So he resolved that the letter should be written before he saw Violet. But how could he write such a letter and instantly afterwards do that which would be false to the spirit of a letter so written? Could he bid Lord Chiltern come home to woo Violet Effingham, and instantly go forth to woo her for himself? He found that he could not do so,—unless he told the whole truth to Lord Chiltern. In no other way could he carry out his project and satisfy his own idea of what was honest.

The Earl bade him send to the hotel for his things. "The Baldock people are all here, you know, but they go very early to-morrow." Then Phineas declared that he also must return to London very early on the morrow;—but in the meantime he would go to the inn and fetch his things. The Earl thanked him again and again for his generous kindness; and Phineas, blushing as he received the thanks, went back and wrote his letter to Lord Chiltern. It was an elaborate letter, written, as regards the first and larger portion of it, with words intended to bring the prodigal son back to the father's home. And everything was said about Miss Effingham that could or should have been said. Then, on the last page, he told his own story. "Now," he said, "I must speak of myself:"—and he went on to explain to his friend, in the plainest language that he could use, his own position. "I have loved her," he said, "for six months, and I am here with the express intention of asking her to take me. The chances are

ten to one that she refuses me. I do not deprecate your anger,—if you choose to be angry. But I am endeavouring to treat you well, and I ask you to do the same by me. I must convey to you your father's message, and after doing so I cannot address myself to Miss Effingham without telling you. I should feel myself to be false were I to do so. In the event,—the probable, nay, almost certain event of my being refused,—I shall trust you to keep my secret. Do not quarrel with me if you can help it;—but if you must I will be ready." Then he posted the letter and went up to the castle.

He had only the one day for his action, and he knew that Violet was watched by Lady Baldock as by a dragon. He was told that the Earl was out with the young ladies, and was shown to his room. On going to the drawing-room he found Lady Baldock, with whom he had been, to a certain degree, a favourite, and was soon deeply engaged in a conversation as to the practicability of shutting up all the breweries and distilleries by Act of Parliament. But lunch relieved him, and brought the young ladies in at two. Miss Effingham seemed to be really glad to see him, and even Miss Boreham, Lady Baldock's daughter, was very gracious to him. For the Earl had been speaking well of his young member, and Phineas had in a way grown into the good graces of sober and discreet people. After lunch they were to ride;—the Earl, that is, and Violet. Lady Baldock and her daughter were to have the carriage. "I can mount you, Finn, if you would like it," said the Earl. "Of course he 'll like it," said Violet; "do you suppose Mr. Finn will

object to ride with me in Saulsby Woods? It won't be the first time, will it?" "Violet," said Lady Baldock, "you have the most singular way of talking." "I suppose I have," said Violet; "but I don't think I can change it now. Mr. Finn knows me too well to mind it much."

It was past five before they were on horseback, and up to that time Phineas had not found himself alone with Violet Effingham for a moment. They had sat together after lunch in the dining-room for nearly an hour, and had sauntered into the hall and knocked about the billiard balls, and then stood together at the open doors of a conservatory. But Lady Baldock or Miss Boreham had always been there. Nothing could be more pleasant than Miss Effingham's words, or more familiar than her manner to Phineas. She had expressed strong delight at his success in getting a seat in Parliament, and had talked to him about the Kennedys as though they had created some special bond of union between her and Phineas which ought to make them intimate. But, for all that, she could not be got to separate herself from Lady Baldock;—and when she was told that if she meant to ride she must go and dress herself, she went at once.

But he thought that he might have a chance on horseback; and after they had been out about half an hour, chance did favour him. For a while he rode behind with the carriage, calculating that by his so doing the Earl would be put off his guard, and would be disposed after a while to change places with him. And so it fell out. At a certain fall of ground in the park, where the road turned round and crossed a bridge over the little river, the carriage came up with the first

two horses, and Lady Baldock spoke a word to the Earl. Then Violet pulled up, allowing the vehicle to pass the bridge first, and in this way she and Phineas were brought together,—and in this way they rode on. But he was aware that he must greatly increase the distance between them and the others of their party before he could dare to plead his suit, and even were that done he felt that he would not know how to plead it on horseback.

They had gone on some half-mile in this way when they reached a spot on which a green ride led away from the main road through the trees to the left. "You remember this place, do you not?" said Violet. Phineas declared that he remembered it well. "I must go round by the woodman's cottage. You won't mind coming?" Phineas said that he would not mind, and trotted on to tell them in the carriage.

"Where is she going?" asked Lady Baldock; and then, when Phineas explained, she begged the Earl to go back to Violet. The Earl, feeling the absurdity of this, declared that Violet knew her way very well herself, and thus Phineas got his opportunity.

They rode on almost without speaking for nearly a mile, cantering through the trees, and then they took another turn to the right, and came upon the cottage. They rode to the door, and spoke a word or two to the woman there, and then passed on. "I always come here when I am at Saulsby," said Violet, "that I may teach myself to think kindly of Lord Chiltern."

"I understand it all," said Phineas.

"He used to be so nice;—and is so still, I believe, only that he has taught himself to be so rough. Will he ever change, do you think?"

Phineas knew that in this emergency it was his especial duty to be honest. "I think he would be changed altogether if we could bring him here,—so that he should live among his friends."

"Do you think he would? We must put our heads together, and do it. Don't you think that it is to be done?"

Phineas replied that he thought it was to be done. "I 'll tell you the truth at once, Miss Effingham," he said. "You can do it by a single word."

"Yes;—yes," she said; "but I do not mean that;—without that. It is absurd, you know, that a father should make such a condition as that." Phineas said that he thought it was absurd; and then they rode on again, cantering through the wood. He had been bold to speak to her about Lord Chiltern as he had done, and she had answered just as he would have wished to be answered. But how could he press his suit for himself while she was cantering by his side?

Presently they came to rough ground over which they were forced to walk, and he was close by her side.

"Mr. Finn," she said, "I wonder whether I may ask a question?"

"Any question," he replied.

"Is there any quarrel between you and Lady Laura?"

"None."

"Or between you and him?"

"No;—none. We are greater allies than ever."

"Then why are you not going to be at Loughlinter? She has written to me expressly saying you would not be there."

"Have you not a word to say to me?"

He paused a moment before he replied. "It did not suit," he said at last.

"It is a secret then?"

"Yes;—it is a secret. You are not angry with me?"

"Angry; no."

"It is not a secret of my own, or I should not keep it from you."

"Perhaps I can guess it," she said. "But I will not try. I will not even think of it."

"The cause, whatever it be, has been full of sorrow to me. I would have given my left hand to have been at Loughlinter this autumn."

"Are you so fond of it?"

"I should have been staying there with you," he said. He paused, and for a moment there was no word spoken by either of them; but he could perceive that the hand in which she held her whip was playing with her horse's mane with a nervous movement. "When I found how it must be, and that I must miss you, I rushed down here that I might see you for a moment. And now I am here I do not dare to speak to you of myself." They were now beyond the rocks, and Violet, without speaking a word, again put her horse into a trot. He was by her side in a moment, but he could not see her face. "Have you not a word to say to me?" he asked.

"No;—no—;—no," she replied, "not a word when you speak to me like that. There is the carriage. Come;—we will join them." Then she cantered on, and he followed her till they reached the Earl and Lady Baldock and Miss Boreham. "I have done my devotions now," said Miss Effingham, "and am ready to return to ordinary life."

Phineas could not find another moment in which to speak to her. Though he spent the evening with her, and stood over her as she sang at the Earl's request, and pressed her hand as she went to bed, and was up to see her start in the morning, he could not draw from her either a word or a look.

CHAPTER X.

MR. MONK UPON REFORM.

Phineas Finn went to Ireland immediately after his return from Saulsby, having said nothing further to Violet Effingham, and having heard nothing further from her than what is recorded in the last chapter. He felt very keenly that his position was unsatisfactory, and brooded over it all the autumn and early winter; but he could form no plan for improving it. A dozen times he thought of writing to Miss Effingham, and asking for an explicit answer. He could not, however, bring himself to write the letter, thinking that written expressions of love are always weak and vapid,—and deterred also by a conviction that Violet, if driven to reply in writing, would undoubtedly reply by a refusal. Fifty times he rode again in his imagination his ride in Saulsby Wood, and he told himself as often that the syren's answer to him,—her no, no, no,—had been, of all possible answers, the most indefinite and provoking. The tone of her voice as she galloped away from him, the bearing of her countenance when he rejoined her, her manner to him when he saw her start from the castle in the morning, all forbade him to believe that his words to her had been taken as an offence. She had replied to him with a direct negative, simply with the word "no;" but she had so said it that there had hardly been any sting in the no; and he had known at the moment that whatever might be the result of his suit, he need not regard Violet Effingham as his enemy.

But the doubt made his sojourn in Ireland very wearisome to him. And there were other matters which tended also to his discomfort, though he was not left even at this period of his life without a continuation of success which seemed to be very wonderful. And, first, I will say a word of his discomfort. He heard not a line from Lord Chiltern in answer to the letter which he had written to his lordship. From Lady Laura he did hear frequently. Lady Laura wrote to him exactly as though she had never warned him away from Loughlinter, and as though there had been no occasion for such warning. She sent him letters filled chiefly with politics, saying something also of the guests at Loughlinter, something of the game, and just a word or two here and there of her husband. The letters were very good letters, and he preserved them carefully. It was manifest to him that they were intended to be good letters, and, as such, to be preserved. In one of these, which he received about the end of November, she told him that her brother was again in his old haunt, at the Willingford Bull, and that he had sent to Portman Square for all property of his own that had been left there. But there was no word in that letter of Violet Effingham; and though Lady Laura did not speak more than once of Violet, she always did so as though Violet were simply a joint acquaintance of herself and her correspondent. There was no allusion to the existence of any special regard on his part for Miss Effingham. He had thought that Violet might probably tell her friend what had occurred at Saulsby;—but if she did so, Lady Laura was happy in her powers of reticence. Our hero was disturbed also when he reached home by finding that Mrs. Flood Jones and

Miss Flood Jones had retired from Killaloe for the winter. I do not know whether he might not have been more disturbed by the presence of the young lady, for he would have found himself constrained to exhibit towards her some tenderness of manner; and any such tenderness of manner would, in his existing circumstances, have been dangerous. But he was made to understand that Mary Flood Jones had been taken away from Killaloe because it was thought that he had ill-treated the lady, and the accusation made him unhappy. In the middle of the heat of the last session he had received a letter from his sister, in which some pushing question had been asked as to his then existing feeling about poor Mary. This he had answered petulantly. Nothing more had been written to him about Miss Jones, and nothing was said to him when he reached home. He could not, however, but ask after Mary, and when he did ask, the accusation was made again in that quietly severe manner with which, perhaps, most of us have been made acquainted at some period of our lives. "I think, Phineas," said his sister, "we had better say nothing about dear Mary. She is not here at present, and probably you may not see her while you remain with us." "What 's all that about?" Phineas had demanded,—understanding the whole matter thoroughly. Then his sister had demurely refused to say a word further on the subject, and not a word further was said about Miss Mary Flood Jones. They were at Floodborough, living, he did not doubt, in a very desolate way,—and quite willing, he did not doubt also, to abandon their desolation if he would go over there in the manner that would become him after what had passed on one or two occasions between him

and the young lady. But how was he to do this with such work on his hands as he had undertaken? Now that he was in Ireland, he thought that he did love dear Mary very dearly. He felt that he had two identities,—that he was, as it were, two separate persons,—and that he could, without any real faithlessness, be very much in love with Violet Effingham in his position of man of fashion and member of Parliament in England, and also warmly attached to dear little Mary Flood Jones as an Irishman of Killaloe. He was aware, however, that there was a prejudice against such fulness of heart, and, therefore, resolved sternly that it was his duty to be constant to Miss Effingham. How was it possible that he should marry dear Mary,—he, with such extensive jobs of work on his hands! It was not possible. He must abandon all thought of making dear Mary his own. No doubt they had been right to remove her. But, still, as he took his solitary walks along the Shannon, and up on the hills that overhung the lake above the town, he felt somewhat ashamed of himself, and dreamed of giving up Parliament, of leaving Violet to some noble suitor,—to Lord Chiltern, if she would take him,—and of going to Floodborough with an honest proposal that he should be allowed to press Mary to his heart. Miss Effingham would probably reject him at last; whereas Mary, dear Mary, would come to his heart without a scruple of doubt. Dear Mary! In these days of dreaming, he told himself that, after all, dear Mary was his real love. But, of course, such days were days of dreaming only. He had letters in his pocket from Lady Laura Kennedy

which made it impossible for him to think in earnest of giving up Parliament.

And then there came a wonderful piece of luck in his way. There lived, or had lived, in the town of Galway a very eccentric old lady, one Miss Marian Persse, who was the aunt of Mrs. Finn, the mother of our hero. With this lady Dr. Finn had quarrelled persistently ever since his marriage, because the lady had expressed her wish to interfere in the management of his family,—offering to purchase such right by favourable arrangements in reference to her will. This the doctor had resented, and there had been quarrels. Miss Persse was not a very rich old lady, but she thought a good deal of her own money. And now she died, leaving £3,000 to her nephew Phineas Finn. Another sum of about equal amount she bequeathed to a Roman Catholic seminary; and thus was her worldly wealth divided. "She could n't have done better with it," said the old doctor; "and as far as we are concerned, the windfall is the more pleasant as being wholly unexpected." In these days the doctor was undoubtedly gratified by his son's success in life, and never said much about the law. Phineas in truth did do some work during the autumn, reading blue-books, reading law books, reading perhaps a novel or two at the same time,—but shutting himself up very carefully as he studied, so that his sisters were made to understand that for a certain four hours in the day not a sound was to be allowed to disturb him.

On the receipt of his legacy he at once offered to repay his father all money that had been advanced him over and above his original allowance; but this the doc-

tor refused to take. "It comes to the same thing, Phineas," he said. "What you have of your share now you can't have hereafter. As regards my present income, it has only made me work a little longer than I had intended; and I believe that the later in life a man works, the more likely he is to live." Phineas, therefore, when he returned to London, had his £3,000 in his pocket. He owed some £500; and the remainder he would, of course, invest.

There had been some talk of an autumnal session, but Mr. Mildmay's decision had at last been against it. Who cannot understand that such would be the decision of any Minister to whom was left the slightest fraction of free will in the matter? Why should any Minister court the danger of unnecessary attack, submit himself to unnecessary work, and incur the odium of summoning all his friends from their rest? In the midst of the doubts as to the new and old ministry, when the political needle was vacillating so tremulously on its pivot, pointing now to one set of men as the coming Government and then to another, vague suggestions as to an autumn session might be useful. And they were thrown out in all good faith. Mr. Mildmay, when he spoke on the subject to the Duke, was earnest in thinking that the question of Reform should not be postponed even for six months. "Don't pledge yourself," said the Duke;—and Mr. Mildmay did not pledge himself. Afterwards, when Mr. Mildmay found that he was once more assuredly Prime Minister, he changed his mind, and felt himself to be under a fresh obligation to the Duke. Lord De Terrier had altogether failed, and the country might very well wait till February. The country did wait till

February, somewhat to the disappointment of Phineas Finn, who had become tired of blue-books at Killaloe. The difference between his English life and his life at home was so great, that it was hardly possible that he should not become weary of the latter. He did become weary of it, but strove gallantly to hide his weariness from his father and mother.

At this time the world was talking much about Reform, though Mr. Mildmay had become placidly patient. The feeling was growing, and Mr. Turnbull, with his friends, was doing all he could to make it grow fast. There was a certain amount of excitement on the subject; but the excitement had grown downwards, from the leaders to the people,—from the self-instituted leaders of popular politics down, by means of the press, to the ranks of working men, instead of growing upwards, from the dissatisfaction of the masses, till it expressed itself by this mouthpiece and that, chosen by the people themselves. There was no strong throb through the country, making men feel that safety was to be had by Reform, and could not be had without Reform. But there was an understanding that the press and the orators were too strong to be ignored, and that some new measure of Reform must be conceded to them. The sooner the concession was made, the less it might be necessary to concede. And all men of all parties were agreed on this point. That Reform was in itself odious to many of those who spoke of it freely, who offered themselves willingly to be its promoters, was acknowledged. It was not only odious to Lord De Terrier and to most of those who worked with him, but was equally so to many of Mr. Mildmay's most constant supporters.

The Duke had no wish for Reform. Indeed it is hard to suppose that such a Duke can wish for any change in a state of things that must seem to him to be so salutary. Workmen were getting full wages. Farmers were paying their rent. Capitalists by the dozen were creating capitalists by the hundreds. Nothing was wrong in the country, but the over-dominant spirit of speculative commerce;—and there was nothing in Reform to check that. Why should the Duke want Reform? As for such men as Lord Brentford, Sir Harry Coldfoot, Lord Plinlimmon, and Mr. Legge Wilson, it was known to all men that they advocated Reform as we all of us advocate doctors. Some amount of doctoring is necessary for us. We may hardly hope to avoid it. But let us have as little of the doctor as possible. Mr. Turnbull, and the cheap press, and the rising spirit of the loudest among the people, made it manifest that something must be conceded. Let us be generous in our concession. That was now the doctrine of many,—perhaps of most of the leading politicians of the day. Let us be generous. Let us at any rate seem to be generous. Let us give with an open hand,—but still with a hand which, though open, shall not bestow too much. The coach must be allowed to run down the hill. Indeed, unless the coach goes on running no journey will be made. But let us have the drag on both the hind-wheels. And we must remember that coaches running down hill without drags are apt to come to serious misfortune.

But there were men, even in the Cabinet, who had other ideas of public service than that of dragging the wheels of the coach. Mr. Gresham was in earnest. Plantagenet Palliser was in earnest. That exceedingly

intelligent young nobleman Lord Cantrip was in earnest. Mr. Mildmay threw, perhaps, as much of earnestness into the matter as was compatible with his age and his full appreciation of the manner in which the present cry for Reform had been aroused. He was thoroughly honest, thoroughly patriotic, and thoroughly ambitious that he should be written of hereafter as one who to the end of a long life had worked sedulously for the welfare of the people;—but he disbelieved in Mr. Turnbull, and in the bottom of his heart indulged an aristocratic contempt for the penny press. And there was no man in England more in earnest, more truly desirous of Reform, than Mr. Monk. It was his great political idea that political advantages should be extended to the people, whether the people clamoured for them or did not clamour for them,—even whether they desired them or did not desire them. "You do not ask a child whether he would like to learn his lesson," he would say. "At any rate, you do not wait till he cries for his book." When, therefore, men said to him that there was no earnestness in the cry for Reform, that the cry was a false cry, got up for factious purposes by interested persons, he would reply that the thing to be done should not be done in obedience to any cry, but because it was demanded by justice, and was a debt due to the people.

Our hero in the autumn had written to Mr. Monk on the politics of the moment, and the following had been Mr. Monk's reply:

"Longroyston, October 12, 186—.

"My dear Finn,—I am staying here with the Duke and Duchess of St. Bungay. The house is very full,

and Mr. Mildmay was here last week; but as I don't shoot, and can't play billiards, and have no taste for charades, I am becoming tired of the gaieties, and shall leave them to-morrow. Of course you know that we are not to have the autumn session. I think that Mr. Mildmay is right. Could we have been sure of passing our measure, it would have been very well; but we could not have been sure, and failure with our bill in a session convened for the express purpose of passing it would have injured the cause greatly. We could hardly have gone on with it again in the spring. Indeed, we must have resigned. And though I may truly say that I would as lief have a good measure from Lord De Terrier as from Mr. Mildmay, and that I am indifferent to my own present personal position, still I think that we should endeavour to keep our seats as long as we honestly believe ourselves to be more capable of passing a good measure than are our opponents.

"I am astonished by the difference of opinion which exists about Reform,—not only as to the difference in the extent and exact tendency of the measure that is needed,—but that there should be such a divergence of ideas as to the grand thing to be done and the grand reason for doing it. We are all agreed that we want Reform in order that the House of Commons may be returned by a larger proportion of the people than is at present employed upon that work, and that each member when returned should represent a somewhat more equal section of the whole constituencies of the country than our members generally do at present. All then confess that a £50 county franchise must be too high, and that a borough with less than

two hundred registered voters must be wrong. But it seems to me that but few among us perceive, or at any rate acknowledge, the real reasons for changing these things and reforming what is wrong without delay. One great authority told us the other day that the sole object of legislation on this subject should be to get together the best possible 658 members of Parliament. That to me would be a most repulsive idea if it were not that by its very vagueness it becomes inoperative. Who shall say what is best; or what characteristic constitutes excellence in a member of Parliament? If the gentleman means excellence in general wisdom, or in statecraft, or in skill in talking, or in private character, or even excellence in patriotism, then I say that he is utterly wrong, and has never touched with his intellect the true theory of representation. One only excellence may be acknowledged, and that is the excellence of likeness. As a portrait should be like the person portrayed, so should a representative House be like the people whom it represents. Nor in arranging a franchise does it seem to me that we have a right to regard any other view. If a country be unfit for representative government,—and it may be that there are still peoples unable to use properly that greatest of all blessings,—the question as to what state policy may be best for them is a different question. But if we do have representation, let the representative assembly be like the people, whatever else may be its virtues,—and whatever else its vices.

"Another great authority has told us that our House of Commons should be the mirror of the people. I say, not its mirror, but its miniature. And let the artist

be careful to put in every line of the expression of that ever-moving face. To do this is a great work, and the artist must know his trade well. In America the work has been done with so coarse a hand that nothing is shown in the picture but the broad, plain, unspeaking outline of the face. As you look from the represented to the representation you cannot but acknowledge the likeness;—but there is in that portrait more of the body than of the mind. The true portrait should represent more than the body. With us, hitherto, there have been snatches of the countenance of the nation which have been inimitable,—a turn of the eye here and a curl of the lip there, which have seemed to denote a power almost divine. There have been marvels on the canvas so beautiful that one approaches the work of remodelling it with awe. But not only is the picture imperfect,—a thing of snatches,—but with years it becomes less and still less like its original.

"The necessity for remodelling it is imperative, and we shall be cowards if we decline the work. But let us be specially careful to retain as much as possible of those lines which we all acknowledge to be so faithfully representative of our nation. To give to a bare numerical majority of the people that power which the numerical majority has in the United States, would not be to achieve representation. The nation as it now exists would not be known by such a portrait;—but neither can it now be known by that which exists. It seems to me that they who are adverse to change, looking back with an unmeasured respect on what our old Parliaments have done for us, ignore the majestic growth of the English people, and forget the present

in their worship of the past. They think that we must be what we were,—at any rate, what we were thirty years since. They have not, perhaps, gone into the houses of artisans, or, if there, they have not looked into the breasts of the men. With population vice has increased, and these politicians, with ears but no eyes, hear of drunkenness and sin and ignorance. And then they declare to themselves that this wicked, half-barbarous, idle people should be controlled and not represented. A wicked, half-barbarous, idle people may be controlled;—but not a people thoughtful, educated, and industrious. We must look to it that we do not endeavour to carry our control beyond the wickedness and the barbarity, and that we be ready to submit to control from thoughtfulness and industry.

"I hope we shall find you helping at the good work early in the spring.

"Yours, always faithfully,

"JOSHUA MONK."

Phineas was up in London before the end of January, but did not find there many of those whom he wished to see. Mr. Low was there, and to him he showed Mr. Monk's letter, thinking that it must be convincing even to Mr. Low. This he did in Mrs. Low's drawing-room, knowing that Mrs. Low would also condescend to discuss politics on an occasion. He had dined with them, and they had been glad to see him, and Mrs. Low had been less severe than hitherto against the great sin of her husband's late pupil. She had condescended to congratulate him on becoming member for an English borough instead of an Irish one, and had asked him questions about

Saulsby Castle. But, nevertheless, Mr. Monk's letter was not received with that respectful admiration which Phineas thought that it deserved. Phineas, foolishly, had read it out loud, so that the attack came upon him simultaneously from the husband and from the wife.

"It is just the usual claptrap," said Mr. Low, "only put into language somewhat more grandiloquent than usual."

"Claptrap!" said Phineas.

"It 's what I call downright radical nonsense," said Mrs. Low, nodding her head energetically. "Portrait indeed! Why should we want to have a portrait of ignorance and ugliness? What we all want is to have things quiet and orderly."

"Then you 'd better have a paternal Government at once," said Phineas.

"Just so," said Mr. Low,—"only that what you call a paternal Government is not always quiet and orderly. National order I take to be submission to the law. I should not think it quiet and orderly if I were sent to Cayenne without being brought before a jury."

"But such a man as you would not be sent to Cayenne," said Phineas.

"My next-door neighbour might be,—which would be almost as bad. Let him be sent to Cayenne if he deserves it, but let a jury say that he has deserved it. My idea of Government is this,—that we want to be governed by law and not by caprice, and that we must have a legislature to make our laws. If I thought that Parliament as at present established made the laws badly, I would desire a change; but I doubt whether we shall have them better from any change in Parliament which Reform will give us."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Low. "But we shall have a lot of beggars put on horseback, and we all know where they ride to."

Then Phineas became aware that it is not easy to convince any man or any woman on a point of politics,—not even though he who argues may have an eloquent letter from a philosophical Cabinet Minister in his pocket to assist him.

CHAPTER XI.

PHINEAS FINN MAKES PROGRESS.

February was far advanced and the new Reform Bill had already been brought forward, before Lady Laura Kennedy came up to town. Phineas had of course seen Mr. Kennedy, and had heard from him tidings of his wife. She was at Saulsby with Lady Baldock and Miss Boreham and Violet Effingham, but was to be in London soon. Mr. Kennedy, as it appeared, did not quite know when he was to expect his wife; and Phineas thought that he could perceive from the tone of the husband's voice that something was amiss. He could not, however, ask any questions excepting such as referred to the expected arrival. Was Miss Effingham to come to London with Lady Laura? Mr. Kennedy believed that Miss Effingham would be up before Easter, but he did not know whether she would come with his wife. "Women," he said, "are so fond of mystery that one can never quite know what they intend to do." He corrected himself at once, however, perceiving that he had seemed to say something against his wife, and explained that his general accusation against the sex was not intended to apply to Lady Laura. This, however, he did so awkwardly as to strengthen the feeling with Phineas that something assuredly was wrong. "Miss Effingham," said Mr. Kennedy, "never seems to know her own mind." "I suppose she is like other beautiful girls

who are petted on all sides," said Phineas. "As for her beauty, I don't think much of it," said Mr. Kennedy; "and as for petting, I do not understand it in reference to grown persons. Children may be petted, and dogs,—though that too is bad; but what you call petting for grown persons is I think frivolous and almost indecent." Phineas could not help thinking of Lord Chiltern's opinion that it would have been wise to have left Mr. Kennedy in the hands of the garrotters.

The debate on the second reading of the bill was to be commenced on the 1st of March, and two days before that Lady Laura arrived in Grosvenor Place. Phineas got a note from her in three words to say that she was at home and would see him if he called on Sunday afternoon. The Sunday to which she alluded was the last day of February. Phineas was now more certain than ever that something was wrong. Had there been nothing wrong between Lady Laura and her husband, she would not have rebelled against him by asking visitors to the house on a Sunday. He had nothing to do with that, however, and of course he did as he was desired. He called on the Sunday, and found Mrs. Bonteen sitting with Lady Laura. "I am just in time for the debate," said Lady Laura, when the first greeting was over.

"You don't mean to say that you intend to sit it out," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"Every word of it,—unless I lose my seat. What else is there to be done at present?"

"But the place they give us is so unpleasant," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"There are worse places even than the Ladies' Gallery," said Lady Laura. "And perhaps it is as well

to make one's self used to inconveniences of all kinds. You will speak, Mr. Finn?"

"I intend to do so."

"Of course you will. The great speeches will be Mr. Gresham's, Mr. Daubeny's, and Mr. Monk's."

"Mr. Palliser intends to be very strong," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"A man cannot be strong or not as he likes it," said Lady Laura. "Mr. Palliser I believe to be a most useful man, but he never can become an orator. He is of the same class as Mr. Kennedy,—only of course higher in the class."

"We all look for a great speech from Mr. Kennedy," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"I have not the slightest idea whether he will open his lips," said Lady Laura. Immediately after that Mrs. Bonteen took her leave. "I hate that woman like poison," continued Lady Laura. "She is always playing a game, and it is such a small game that she plays! And she contributes so little to society. She is not witty nor well-informed,—not even sufficiently ignorant or ridiculous to be a laughing-stock. One gets nothing from her, and yet she has made her footing good in the world."

"I thought she was a friend of yours."

"You did not think so! You could not have thought so! How can you bring such an accusation against me, knowing me as you do? But never mind Mrs. Bonteen now. On what day shall you speak?"

"On Tuesday if I can."

"I suppose you can arrange it?"

"I shall endeavour to do so, as far as any arrangement can go."

"We shall carry the second reading," said Lady Laura.

"Yes," said Phineas; "I think we shall; but by the votes of men who are determined so to pull the bill to pieces in Committee, that its own parents will not know it. I doubt whether Mr. Mildmay will have the temper to stand it."

"They tell me that Mr. Mildmay will abandon the custody of the bill to Mr. Gresham after his first speech."

"I don't know that Mr. Gresham's temper is more enduring than Mr. Mildmay's," said Phineas.

"Well;—we shall see. My own impression is that nothing would save the country so effectually at the present moment as the removal of Mr. Turnbull to a higher and a better sphere."

"Let us say the House of Lords," said Phineas.

"God forbid!" said Lady Laura.

Phineas sat there for half an hour and then got up to go, having spoken no word on any other subject than that of politics. He longed to ask after Violet. He longed to make some inquiry respecting Lord Chiltern. And, to tell the truth, he felt painfully curious to hear Lady Laura say something about her own self. He could not but remember what had been said between them up over the waterfall, and how he had been warned not to return to Loughlinter. And then again, did Lady Laura know anything of what had passed between him and Violet? "Where is your brother?" he said, as he rose from his chair.

"Oswald is in London. He was here not an hour before you came in."

"Where is he staying?"

"At Mauregy's. He goes down on Tuesday, I think. He is to see his father to-morrow morning."

"By agreement?"

"Yes;—by agreement. There is a new trouble,—about money that they think to be due to me. But I cannot tell you all now. There have been some words between Mr. Kennedy and papa. But I won't talk about it. You would find Oswald at Mauregy's at any hour before eleven to-morrow."

"Did he say anything about me?" asked Phineas.

"We mentioned your name certainly."

"I do not ask from vanity, but I want to know whether he is angry with me."

"Angry with you! Not in the least. I 'll tell you just what he said. He said he should not wish to live even with you, but that he would sooner try it with you than with any man he ever knew."

"He had got a letter from me?"

"He did not say so;—but he did not say he had not."

"I will see him to-morrow if I can." And then Phineas prepared to go.

"One word, Mr. Finn," said Lady Laura, hardly looking him in the face and yet making an effort to do so. "I wish you to forget what I said to you at Loughlinter."

"It shall be as though it were forgotten," said Phineas.

"Let it be absolutely forgotten. In such a case a man is bound to do all that a woman asks him, and no man has a truer spirit of chivalry than yourself. That is all. Look in when you can. I will not ask you to dine here as yet, because we are so frightfully dull.

Do your best on Tuesday, and then let us see you on Wednesday. Good-bye."

Phineas as he walked across the park towards his club made up his mind that he would forget the scene by the waterfall. He had never quite known what it had meant, and he would wipe it away from his mind altogether. He acknowledged to himself that chivalry did demand of him that he should never allow himself to think of Lady Laura's rash words to him. That she was not happy with her husband was very clear to him;—but that was altogether another affair. She might be unhappy with her husband without indulging any guilty love. He had never thought it possible that she could be happy living with such a husband as Mr. Kennedy. All that, however, was now past remedy, and she must simply endure the mode of life which she had prepared for herself. There were other men and women in London tied together for better and worse, in reference to whose union their friends knew that there would be no better;—that it must be all worse. Lady Laura must bear it, as it was borne by many another married woman.

On the Monday morning Phineas called at Mauregy's Hotel at ten o'clock, but in spite of Lady Laura's assurance to the contrary, he found that Lord Chiltern was out. He had felt some palpitation at the heart as he made his inquiry, knowing well the fiery nature of the man he expected to see. It might be that there would be some actual personal conflict between him and this half-mad lord before he got back again into the street. What Lady Laura had said about her brother did not in the estimation of Phineas make this at all the less probable. The half-mad lord was so sin-

gular in his ways that it might well be that he should speak handsomely of a rival behind his back and yet take him by the throat as soon as they were together, face to face. And yet, as Phineas thought, it was necessary that he should see the half-mad lord. He had written a letter to which he had received no reply, and he considered it to be incumbent on him to ask whether it had been received and whether any answer to it was intended to be given. He went therefore to Lord Chiltern at once,—as I have said, with some feeling at his heart that there might be violence, at any rate of words, before he should find himself again in the street. But Lord Chiltern was not there. All that the porter knew was that Lord Chiltern intended to leave the house on the following morning. Then Phineas wrote a note and left it with the porter.

"Dear Chiltern,—I particularly want to see you with reference to a letter I wrote to you last summer. I must be in the House to-day from four till the debate is over. I will be at the Reform Club from two till half-past three, and will come if you will send for me, or I will meet you anywhere at any hour to-morrow morning.

"Yours, always, P. F."

No message came to him at the Reform Club, and he was in his seat in the House by four o'clock. During the debate a note was brought to him, which ran as follows:—

"I have got your letter this moment. Of course we must meet. I hunt on Tuesday, and go down by the

early train; but I will come to town on Wednesday. We shall require to be private, and I will therefore be at your rooms at one o'clock on that day.—C."

Phineas at once perceived that the note was a hostile note, written in an angry spirit,—written to one whom the writer did not at the moment acknowledge to be his friend. This was certainly the case, whatever Lord Chiltern may have said to his sister as to his friendship for Phineas. Phineas crushed the note into his pocket, and of course determined that he would be in his rooms at the hour named.

The debate was opened by a speech from Mr. Mildmay, in which that gentleman at great length and with much perspicuity explained his notion of that measure of parliamentary Reform which he thought to be necessary. He was listened to with the greatest attention to the close,—and perhaps, at the end of his speech, with more attention than usual, as there had gone abroad a rumour that the Prime Minister intended to declare that this would be the last effort of his life in that course. But, if he ever intended to utter such a pledge, his heart misgave him when the time came for uttering it. He merely said that as the management of the bill in committee would be an affair of much labour, and probably spread over many nights, he would be assisted in his work by his colleagues, and especially by his right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. It was then understood that Mr. Gresham would take the lead should the bill go into committee;—but it was understood also that no resignation of leadership had been made by Mr. Mildmay.

The measure now proposed to the House was very

much the same as that which had been brought forward in the last session. The existing theory of British representation was not to be changed, but the actual practice was to be brought nearer to the ideal theory. The ideas of manhood suffrage, and of electoral districts, were to be as forever removed from the bulwarks of the British Constitution. There were to be counties with agricultural constituencies, purposely arranged to be purely agricultural, whenever the nature of the counties would admit of its being so. No artificer at Reform, let him be conservative or liberal, can make Middlesex or Lancashire agricultural; but Wiltshire and Suffolk were to be preserved inviolable to the plough,—and the apples of Devonshire were still to have their sway. Every town in the three kingdoms with a certain population was to have two members. But here there was much room for cavil,—as all men knew would be the case. Who shall say what is a town, or where shall be its limits? Bits of counties might be borrowed, so as to lessen the conservatism of the county without endangering the liberalism of the borough. And then there were the boroughs with one member, —and then the groups of little boroughs. In the discussion of any such arrangement how easy is the picking of holes; how impossible the fabrication of a garment that shall be impervious to such picking! Then again there was that great question of the ballot. On that there was to be no mistake. Mr. Mildmay again pledged himself to disappear from the Treasury Bench should any motion, clause, or resolution be carried by that House in favour of the ballot. He spoke for three hours, and then left the carcass of his bill to be fought for by the opposing armies.

No reader of these pages will desire that the speeches in the debate should be even indicated. It soon became known that the conservatives would not divide the House against the second reading of the bill. They declared, however, very plainly their intention of so altering the clauses of the bill in committee,—or at least of attempting so to do,—as to make the bill their bill, rather than the bill of their opponents. To this Mr. Palliser replied that as long as nothing vital was touched, the Government would only be too happy to oblige their friends opposite. If anything vital were touched, the Government could only fall back upon their friends on that side. And in this way men were very civil to each other. But Mr. Turnbull, who opened the debate on the Tuesday, thundered out an assurance to gods and men that he would divide the House on the second reading of the bill itself. He did not doubt but that there were many good men and true to go with him into the lobby, but into the lobby he would go if he had no more than a single friend to support him. And he warned the Sovereign, and he warned the House, and he warned the people of England, that the measure of Reform now proposed by a so-called liberal Minister was a measure prepared in concert with the ancient enemies of the people. He was very loud, very angry, and quite successful in hallooing down sundry attempts which were made to interrupt him. "I find," he said, "that there are many members here who do not know me yet,—young members, probably, who are green from the waste lands and road-sides of private life. They will know me soon, and then, may be, there will be less of this foolish noise, less of this elongation of unnecessary necks. Our

Rome must be aroused to a sense of its danger by other voices than these." He was called to order, but it was ruled that he had not been out of order,—and he was very triumphant. Mr. Monk answered him, and it was declared afterwards that Mr. Monk's speech was one of the finest pieces of oratory that had ever been uttered in that House. He made one remark personal to Mr. Turnbull. "I quite agreed with the right honourable gentleman in the chair," he said, "when he declared that the honourable member was not out of order just now. We all of us agree with him always on such points. The rules of our House have been laid down with the utmost latitude, so that the course of our debates may not be frivolously or too easily interrupted. But a member may be so in order as to incur the displeasure of the House, and to merit the reproaches of his countrymen." This little duel gave great life to the debate; but it was said that those two great reformers, Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Monk, could never again meet as friends.

In the course of the debate on Tuesday, Phineas got upon his legs. The reader, I trust, will remember that hitherto he had failed altogether as a speaker. On one occasion he had lacked even the spirit to use and deliver an oration which he had prepared. On a second occasion he had broken down,—woefully, and past all redemption, as said those who were not his friends, —unfortunately, but not past redemption, as said those who were his true friends. After that once again he had arisen and said a few plain words which had called for no remark, and had been spoken as though he were in the habit of addressing the House daily. It may be doubted whether there were half-a-dozen men now pres-

ent who recognised the fact that this man, who was so well known to so many of them, was now about to make another attempt at a first speech. Phineas himself diligently attempted to forget that such was the case. He had prepared for himself a few headings of what he intended to say, and on one or two points had arranged his words. His hope was that even though he should forget the words, he might still be able to cling to the thread of his discourse. When he found himself again upon his legs amidst those crowded seats, for a few moments there came upon him that old sensation of awe. Again things grew dim before his eyes, and again he hardly knew at which end of that long chamber the Speaker was sitting. But there arose within him a sudden courage, as soon as the sound of his own voice in that room had made itself intimate to his ear; and after the first few sentences, all fear, all awe, was gone from him. When he read his speech in the report afterwards, he found that he had strayed very wide of his intended course, but he had strayed without tumbling into ditches, or falling into sunken pits. He had spoken much from Mr. Monk's letter, but had had the grace to acknowledge whence had come his inspiration. He hardly knew, however, whether he had failed again or not, till Barrington Erle came up to him as they were leaving the House, with his old easy pressing manner. "So you have got into form at last," he said. "I always thought that it would come. I never for a moment believed but that it would come sooner or later." Phineas Finn answered not a word; but he went home and lay awake all night triumphant. The verdict of Barrington Erle sufficed to assure him that he had succeeded.

CHAPTER XII.

A ROUGH ENCOUNTER.

PHINEAS, when he woke, had two matters to occupy his mind,—his success of the previous night, and his coming interview with Lord Chiltern. He stayed at home the whole morning, knowing that nothing could be done before the hour Lord Chiltern had named for his visit. He read every word of the debate, studiously postponing the perusal of his own speech till he should come to it in due order. And then he wrote to his father, commencing his letter as though his writing had no reference to the affairs of the previous night. But he soon found himself compelled to break into some mention of it. "I send you a Times," he said, "in order that you may see that I have had my finger in the pie. I have hitherto abstained from putting myself forward in the House, partly through a base fear for which I despise myself, and partly through a feeling of prudence that a man of my age should not be in a hurry to gather laurels. This is literally true. There has been the fear, and there has been the prudence. My wonder is, that I have not incurred more contempt from others because I have been a coward. People have been so kind to me that I must suppose them to have judged me more leniently than I have judged myself." Then, as he was putting up the paper, he looked again at his own speech, and

of course read every word of it once more. As he did so it occurred to him that the reporters had been more than courteous to him. The man who had followed him had been, he thought, at any rate as long-winded as himself; but to this orator less than half a column had been granted. To him had been granted ten lines in big type, and after that a whole column and a half. Let Lord Chiltern come and do his worst!

When it wanted but twenty minutes to one, and he was beginning to think in what way he had better answer the half-mad lord, should the lord in his wrath be very mad, there came to him a note by the hand of some messenger. He knew at once that it was from Lady Laura, and opened it in hot haste. It was as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Finn,—We are all talking about your speech. My father was in the gallery and heard it,—and said that he had to thank me for sending you to Loughton. That made me very happy. Mr. Kennedy declares that you were eloquent, but too short. That coming from him is praise indeed. I have seen Barrington, who takes pride to himself that you are his political child. Violet says that it is the only speech she ever read. I was there, and was delighted. I was sure that it was in you to do it.

"Yours, L. K.

"I suppose we shall see you after the House is up, but I write this as I shall barely have an opportunity of speaking to you then. I shall be in Portman Square, not at home, from six till seven."

The moment in which Phineas refolded this note and put it into his breast coat-pocket was, I think, the happiest of his life. Then, before he had withdrawn his hand from his breast, he remembered that what was now about to take place between him and Lord Chiltern would probably be the means of separating him altogether from Lady Laura and her family. Nay; might it not render it necessary that he should abandon the seat in Parliament which had been conferred upon him by the personal kindness of Lord Brentford? Let that be as it might. One thing was clear to him. He would not abandon Violet Effingham till he should be desired to do so in the plainest language by Violet Effingham herself. Looking at his watch he saw that it was one o'clock, and at that moment Lord Chiltern was announced.

Phineas went forward immediately with his hand out to meet his visitor. "Chiltern," he said, "I am very glad to see you." But Lord Chiltern did not take his hand. Passing on to the table, with his hat still on his head, and with a dark scowl upon his brow, the young lord stood for a few moments perfectly silent. Then he chucked a letter across the table to the spot at which Phineas was standing. Phineas, taking up the letter, perceived that it was that which he, in his great attempt to be honest, had written from the inn at Loughton. "It is my own letter to you," he said.

"Yes; it is your letter to me. I received it oddly enough together with your own note at Mauregy's,—on Monday morning. It has been round the world, I suppose, and reached me only then. You must withdraw it."

"Withdraw it?"

"Yes, sir, withdraw it. As far as I can learn, without asking any question which would have committed myself or the young lady, you have not acted upon it. You have not yet done what you there threaten to do. In that you have been very wise, and there can be no difficulty in your withdrawing the letter."

"I certainly shall not withdraw it, Lord Chiltern."

"Do you remember—what—I once—told you,—about myself and Miss Effingham?" This question he asked very slowly, pausing between the words, and looking full into the face of his rival, towards whom he had gradually come nearer. And his countenance, as he did so, was by no means pleasant. The redness of his complexion had become more ruddy than usual; he still wore his hat as though with studied insolence; his right hand was clenched; and there was that look of angry purpose in his eye which no man likes to see in the eye of an antagonist. Phineas was afraid of no violence, personal to himself; but he was afraid of,—of what I may, perhaps, best call "a row." To be tumbling over the chairs and tables with his late friend and present enemy in Mrs. Bunce's room would be most unpleasant to him. If there were to be blows he, too, must strike;—and he was very averse to strike Lady Laura's brother, Lord Brentford's son, Violet Effingham's friend. If need be, however, he would strike.

"I suppose I remember what you mean," said Phineas. "I think you declared that you would quarrel with any man who might presume to address Miss Effingham. Is it that to which you allude?"

"It is that," said Lord Chiltern.

"I remember what you said very well. If nothing

else was to deter me from asking Miss Effingham to be my wife, you will hardly think that that ought to have any weight. The threat had no weight."

"It was not spoken as a threat, sir, and that you know as well as I do. It was said from a friend to a friend,—as I thought then. But it is not the less true. I wonder what you can think of faith and truth and honesty of purpose when you took advantage of my absence,—you, whom I had told a thousand times that I loved her better than my own soul! You stand before the world as a rising man, and I stand before the world as a man—damned. You have been chosen by my father to sit for our family borough, while I am an outcast from his house. You have Cabinet Ministers for your friends, while I have hardly a decent associate left to me in the world. But I can say of myself that I have never done anything unworthy of a gentleman, while this thing that you are doing is unworthy of the lowest man."

"I have done nothing unworthy," said Phineas. "I wrote to you instantly when I had resolved,—though it was painful to me to have to tell such a secret to any one."

"You wrote! Yes; when I was miles distant; weeks, months away. But I did not come here to bullirag like an old woman. I got your letter only on Monday, and know nothing of what has occurred. Is Miss Effingham to be—your wife?" Lord Chiltern had now come quite close to Phineas, and Phineas felt that that clenched fist might be in his face in half a moment. Miss Effingham of course was not engaged to him, but it seemed to him that if he were now so to declare, such declaration would appear to have been

drawn from him by fear. "I ask you," said Lord Chiltern, "in what position you now stand towards Miss Effingham. If you are not a coward you will tell me."

"Whether I tell you or not, you know that I am not a coward," said Phineas.

"I shall have to try," said Lord Chiltern. "But if you please I will ask you for an answer to my question."

Phineas paused for a moment, thinking what honesty of purpose and a high spirit would. when combined together, demand of him, and together with these requirements he felt that he was bound to join some feeling of duty towards Miss Effingham. Lord Chiltern was standing there, fiery red, with his hand still clenched, and his hat still on, waiting for his answer. "Let me have your question again," said Phineas, "and I will answer it if I find that I can do so without loss of self-respect."

"I ask you in what position you stand towards Miss Effingham. Mind, I do not doubt at all, but I choose to have a reply from yourself."

"You will remember, of course, that I can only answer to the best of my belief."

"Answer to the best of your belief."

"I think she regards me as an intimate friend."

"Had you said as an indifferent acquaintance, you would, I think, have been nearer the mark. But we will let that be. I presume I may understand that you have given up any idea of changing that position?"

"You may understand nothing of the kind, Lord Chiltern."

"Why;—what hope have you?"

"That is another thing. I shall not speak of that;—at any rate not to you."

"Then, sir,——" and now Lord Chiltern advanced another step and raised his hand as though he were about to put it with some form of violence on the person of his rival.

"Stop, Chiltern," said Phineas, stepping back, so that there was some article of furniture between him and his adversary. "I do not choose that there should be a riot here."

"What do you call a riot, sir? I believe that after all you are a poltroon. What I require of you is that you shall meet me. Will you do that?"

"You mean,—to fight?"

"Yes,—to fight; to fight; to fight. For what other purpose do you suppose that I can wish to meet you?" Phineas felt at the moment that the fighting of a duel would be destructive to all his political hopes. Few Englishmen fight duels in these days. They who do so are always reckoned to be fools. And a duel between him and Lord Brentford's son must, as he thought, separate him from Violet, from Lady Laura, from Lord Brentford, and from his borough. But yet how could he refuse? "What have you to think of, sir, when such an offer as that is made to you?" said the fiery-red lord.

"I have to think whether I have courage enough to refuse to make myself an ass."

"You say that you do not wish to have a riot. That is your way to escape what you call—a riot."

"You want to bully me, Chiltern."

"No, sir;—I simply want this, that you should leave me where you found me, and not interfere with that which you have long known I claim as my own."

"But it is not your own."

"Then you can only fight me."

"You had better send some friend to me, and I will name some one, whom he shall meet."

"Of course I will do that if I have your promise to meet me. We can be in Belgium in an hour or two, and back again in a few more hours;—that is, any one of us who may chance to be alive."

"I will select a friend, and will tell him everything, and will then do as he bids me."

"Yes;—some old steady-going buffer. Mr. Kennedy, perhaps."

"It will certainly not be Mr. Kennedy. I shall probably ask Laurence Fitzgibbon to manage for me in such an affair."

"Perhaps you will see him at once then, so that Colepepper may arrange with him this afternoon. And let me assure you, Mr. Finn, that there will be a meeting between us after some fashion, let the ideas of your friend Mr. Fitzgibbon be what they may." Then Lord Chiltern purposed to go, but turned again as he was going. "And remember this," he said, "my complaint is that you have been false to me,—damnably false; not that you have fallen in love with this young lady or with that." Then the fiery-red lord opened the door for himself and took his departure.

Phineas, as soon as he was alone, walked down to the House, at which there was an early sitting. As he went there was one great question which he had to settle with himself,—Was there any justice in the charge made against him that he had been false to his friend? When he had thought over the matter at Saulsby, after rushing down there that he might throw himself at Violet's feet, he had assured himself that such a letter

as that which he resolved to write to Lord Chiltern, would be even chivalrous in its absolute honesty. He would tell his purpose to Lord Chiltern the moment that his purpose was formed;—and would afterwards speak of Lord Chiltern behind his back as one dear friend should speak of another. Had Miss Effingham shown the slightest intention of accepting Lord Chiltern's offer, he would have acknowledged to himself that the circumstances of his position made it impossible that he should, with honour, become his friend's rival. But was he to be debarred forever from getting that which he wanted because Lord Chiltern wanted it also,—knowing, as he did so well, that Lord Chiltern could not get the thing which he wanted? All this had been quite sufficient for him at Saulsby. But now the charge against him that he had been false to his friend rang in his ears and made him unhappy. It certainly was true that Lord Chiltern had not given up his hopes, and that he had spoken probably more openly to Phineas respecting them than he had done to any other human being. If it was true that he had been false, then he must comply with any requisition which Lord Chiltern might make,—short of voluntarily giving up the lady. He must fight if he were asked to do so, even though fighting were his ruin.

When again in the House yesterday's scene came back upon him, and more than one man came to him congratulating him. Mr. Monk took his hand and spoke a word to him. The old Premier nodded to him. Mr. Gresham greeted him; and Plantagenet Palliser openly told him that he had made a good speech. How sweet would all this have been had there not been

ever at his heart the remembrance of his terrible difficulty,—the consciousness that he was about to be forced into an absurdity which would put an end to all this sweetness! Why was the world in England so severe against duelling? After all, as he regarded the matter now, a duel might be the best way, nay, the only way out of a difficulty. If he might only be allowed to go out with Lord Chiltern the whole thing might be arranged. If he were not shot he might carry on his suit with Miss Effingham unfettered by any impediment on that side. And if he were shot, what matter was that to any one but himself? Why should the world be so thin-skinned,—so foolishly chary of human life?

Laurence Fitzgibbon did not come to the House, and Phineas looked for him at both the clubs which he frequented,—leaving a note at each as he did not find him. He also left a note for him at his lodgings in Duke Street. "I must see you this evening. I shall dine at the Reform Club,—pray come there." After that, Phineas went up to Portman Square, in accordance with the instructions received from Lady Laura.

There he saw Violet Effingham, meeting her for the first time since he had parted from her on the great steps at Saulsby. Of course he spoke to her, and of course she was gracious to him. But her graciousness was only a smile and his speech was only a word. There were many in the room, but not enough to make privacy possible,—as it becomes possible at a crowded evening meeting. Lord Brentford was there, and the Bonteens, and Barrington Erle, and Lady Glencora

Palliser, and Lord Cantrip with his young wife. It was manifestly a meeting of liberals, semi-social and semi-political;—so arranged that ladies might feel that some interest in politics was allowed to them, and perhaps some influence also. Afterwards Mr. Palliser himself came in. Phineas, however, was most struck by finding that Laurence Fitzgibbon was there, and that Mr. Kennedy was not. In regard to Mr. Kennedy, he was quite sure that had such a meeting taken place before Lady Laura's marriage, Mr. Kennedy would have been present. "I must speak to you as we go away," said Phineas, whispering a word into Fitzgibbon's ear. "I have been leaving notes for you all about the town."

"Not a duel, I hope," said Fitzgibbon.

How pleasant it was,—that meeting; or would have been had there not been that nightmare on his breast! They all talked as though there were perfect accord between them and perfect confidence. There were there great men,—Cabinet Ministers, and beautiful women,—the wives and daughters of some of England's highest nobles. And Phineas Finn, throwing back, now and again, a thought to Killaloe, found himself among them as one of themselves. How could any Mr. Low say that he was wrong?

On a sofa near to him, so that he could almost touch her foot with his, was sitting Violet Effingham, and as he leaned over from his chair discussing some point in Mr. Mildmay's bill with that most inveterate politician, Lady Glencora, Violet looked into his face and smiled. Oh heavens! If Lord Chiltern and he might only toss up as to which of them should go to Patagonia and remain there for the next ten years, and

which should have Violet Effingham for a wife in London!

"Come along, Phineas, if you mean to come," said Laurence Fitzgibbon. Phineas was of course bound to go, though Lady Glencora was still talking radicalism, and Violet Effingham was still smiling ineffably.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DUEL.

"I KNEW it was a duel;—bedad I did," said Laurence Fitzgibbon, standing at the corner of Orchard Street and Oxford Street, when Phineas had half told his story. "I was sure of it from the tone of your voice, my boy. We must n't let it come off, that 's all;—not if we can help it." Then Phineas was allowed to proceed and finish his story. "I don't see any way out of it; I don't, indeed," said Laurence. By this time Phineas had come to think that the duel was in very truth the best way out of the difficulty. It was a bad way out, but then it was a way;—and he could not see any other. "As for ill-treating him, that 's nonsense," said Laurence. "What are the girls to do, if one fellow may n't come on as soon as another fellow is down? But then, you see, a fellow never knows when he 's down himself, and therefore he thinks that he 's ill used. I 'll tell you what now. I should n't wonder if we could n't do it on the sly,—unless one of you is stupid enough to hit the other in an awkward place. If you are certain of your hand now, the right shoulder is the best spot." Phineas felt very certain that he would not hit Lord Chiltern in an awkward place, although he was by no means sure of his hand. Let come what might, he would aim at his adversary. But of this he had thought it proper to say nothing to Laurence Fitzgibbon.

And the duel did come off on the sly. The meet-

ing in the drawing-room in Portman Square, of which mention was made in the last chapter, took place on a Wednesday afternoon. On the Thursday, Friday, Monday, and Tuesday following, the great debate on Mr. Mildmay's bill was continued, and at three on the Tuesday night the House divided. There was a majority in favour of the Ministers, not large enough to permit them to claim a triumph for their party, or even an ovation for themselves; but still sufficient to enable them to send their bill into committee. Mr. Daubeny and Mr. Turnbull had again joined their forces together in opposition to the ministerial measure. On the Thursday Phineas had shown himself in the House, but during the remainder of this interesting period he was absent from his place, nor was he seen at the clubs, nor did any man know of his whereabouts. I think that Lady Laura Kennedy was the first to miss him with any real sense of his absence. She would now go to Portman Square on the afternoon of every Sunday,—at which time her husband was attending the second service of his church,—and there she would receive those whom she called her father's guests. But as her father was never there on the Sundays, and as these gatherings had been created by herself, the reader will probably think that she was obeying her husband's behests in regard to the Sabbath after a very indifferent fashion. The reader may be quite sure, however, that Mr. Kennedy knew well what was being done in Portman Square. Whatever might be Lady Laura's faults, she did not commit the fault of disobeying her husband in secret. There were, probably, a few words on the subject; but we need not go very closely into that matter at the present moment.

On the Sunday which afforded some rest in the middle of the great Reform debate Lady Laura asked for Mr. Finn, and no one could answer her question. And then it was remembered that Laurence Fitzgibbon was also absent. Barrington Erle knew nothing of Phineas,—had heard nothing; but was able to say that Fitzgibbon had been with Mr. Rattler, the patronage secretary and liberal whip, early on Thursday, expressing his intention of absenting himself for two days. Mr. Rattler had been wroth, bidding him remain at his duty, and pointing out to him the great importance of the moment. Then Barrington Erle quoted Laurence Fitzgibbon's reply. "My boy," said Laurence to poor Rattler, "the path of duty leads but to the grave. All the same; I 'll be in at the death, Rattler, my boy, as sure as the sun 's in heaven." Not ten minutes after the telling of this little story, Fitzgibbon entered the room in Portman Square, and Lady Laura at once asked him after Phineas. "Bedad, Lady Laura, I have been out of town myself for two days, and I know nothing."

"Mr. Finn had not been with you, then?"

"With me! No,—not with me. I had a job of business of my own which took me over to Paris. And has Phinny fled too? Poor Rattler! I should n't wonder if it is n't an asylum he 's in before the session is over."

Laurence Fitzgibbon certainly possessed the rare accomplishment of telling a lie with a good grace. Had any man called him a liar he would have considered himself to be not only insulted, but injured also. He believed himself to be a man of truth. There were, however, in his estimation certain subjects on which a

man might depart as wide as the poles are asunder from truth without subjecting himself to any ignominy for falsehood. In dealing with a tradesman as to his debts, or with a rival as to a lady, or with any man or woman in defence of a lady's character, or in any such matter as that of a duel, Laurence believed that a gentleman was bound to lie, and that he would be no gentleman if he hesitated to do so. Not the slightest prick of conscience disturbed him when he told Lady Laura that he had been in Paris, and that he knew nothing of Phineas Finn. But, in truth, during the last day or two he had been in Flanders, and not in Paris, and had stood as second with his friend Phineas on the sands at Blankenberg, a little fishing-town some twelve miles distant from Bruges, and had left his friend since that at an hotel at Ostend,—with a wound just under the shoulder, from which a bullet had been extracted.

The manner of the meeting had been in this wise. Captain Colepepper and Laurence Fitzgibbon had held their meeting, and at this meeting Laurence had taken certain standing-ground on behalf of his friend, and in obedience to his friend's positive instruction;—which was this, that his friend could not abandon his right of addressing the young lady, should he hereafter ever think fit to do so. Let that be granted, and Laurence would do anything. But then that could not be granted, and Laurence could only shrug his shoulders. Nor would Laurence admit that his friend had been false. "The question lies in a nutshell," said Laurence, with that sweet Connaught brogue which always came to him when he desired to be effective;—"here it is. One gentleman tells another that he 's

sweet upon a young lady, but that the young lady has refused him, and always will refuse him, forever and ever. That 's the truth anyhow. Is the second gentleman bound by that not to address the young lady? I say he is not bound. It 'd be a d——d hard treatment, Captain Colepepper, if a man's mouth and all the ardent affections of his heart were to be stopped in that manner! By Jases, I don't know who 'd like to be the friend of any man if that 's to be the way of it."

Captain Colepepper was not very good at an argument. "I think they 'd better see each other," said Colepepper, pulling his thick grey moustache.

"If you choose to have it so, so be it. But I think it the hardest thing in the world;—I do indeed." Then they put their heads together in the most friendly way, and declared that the affair should, if possible, be kept private.

On the Thursday night Lord Chiltern and Captain Colepepper went over by Calais and Lille to Bruges. Laurence Fitzgibbon, with his friend Dr. O'Shaughnessy, crossed by the direct boat from Dover to Ostend. Phineas went to Ostend by Dover and Calais, but he took the day route on Friday. It had all been arranged among them, so that there might be no suspicion as to the job in hand. Even O'Shaughnessy and Laurence Fitzgibbon had left London by separate trains. They met on the sands at Blankenberg about nine o'clock on the Saturday morning, having reached that village in different vehicles from Ostend and Bruges, and had met quite unobserved amidst the sand-heaps. But one shot had been exchanged, and Phineas had been wounded in the right shoulder. He had proposed

to exchange another shot with his left hand, declaring his capability of shooting quite as well with the left as with the right; but to this both Colepepper and Fitzgibbon had objected. Lord Chiltern had offered to shake hands with his late friend in a true spirit of friendship, if only his late friend would say that he did not intend to prosecute his suit with the young lady. In all these disputes the young lady's name was never mentioned. Phineas indeed had not once named Violet to Fitzgibbon, speaking of her always as the lady in question; and though Laurence correctly surmised the identity of the young lady, he never hinted that he had even guessed her name. I doubt whether Lord Chiltern had been so wary when alone with Captain Colepepper; but then Lord Chiltern was, when he spoke at all, a very plain-spoken man. Of course his lordship's late friend Phineas would give no such pledge, and therefore Lord Chiltern moved off the ground and back to Blankenberg and Bruges, and into Brussels, in still living enmity with our hero. Laurence and the doctor took Phineas back to Ostend, and though the bullet was then in his shoulder, Phineas made his way through Blankenberg after such a fashion that no one there knew what had occurred. Not a living soul, except the five concerned, was at that time aware that a duel had been fought among the sand-hills.

Laurence Fitzgibbon made his way to Dover by the Saturday night's boat, and was able to show himself in Portman Square on the Sunday. "Know anything about Phinny Finn?" he said afterwards to Barrington Erle, in answer to an inquiry from that anxious gentleman. "Not a word! I think you 'd better send the town-crier round after him." Barrington, however, did

not feel quite so well assured of Fitzgibbon's truth as Lady Laura had done.

Dr. O'Shaughnessy remained during the Sunday and Monday at Ostend with his patient, and the people at the inn only knew that Mr. Finn had sprained his shoulder badly; and on the Tuesday they came back to London again, viâ Calais and Dover. No bone had been broken, and Phineas, though his shoulder was very painful, bore the journey well. O'Shaughnessy had received a telegram on the Monday, telling him that the division would certainly take place on the Tuesday,—and on the Tuesday, at about ten in the evening, Phineas went down to the House. "By——, you 're here," said Rattler, taking hold of him with an affection that was too warm. "Yes; I 'm here," said Phineas, wincing in agony; "but be a little careful, there 's a good fellow. I 've been down in Kent and put my arm out."

"Put your arm out, have you?" said Rattler, observing the sling for the first time. "I 'm sorry for that. But you 'll stop and vote?"

"Yes;—I 'll stop and vote. I 've come up for the purpose. But I hope it won't be very late."

"There are both Daubeny and Gresham to speak yet, and at least three others. I don't suppose it will be much before three. But you 're all right now. You can go down and smoke if you like!" In this way Phineas Finn spoke in the debate, and heard the end of it, voting for his party, and fought his duel with Lord Chiltern in the middle of it.

He did go and sit on a well-cushioned bench in the smoking-room, and then was interrogated by many of his friends as to his mysterious absence. He had, he

said, been down in Kent, and had had an accident with his arm, by which he had been confined. When this questioner and that perceived that there was some little mystery in the matter, the questioners did not push their questions, but simply entertained their own surmises. One indiscreet questioner, however, did trouble Phineas sorely, declaring that there must have been some affair in which a woman had had a part, and asking after the young lady of Kent. This indiscreet questioner was Laurence Fitzgibbon, who, as Phineas thought, carried his spirit of intrigue a little too far. Phineas stayed and voted, and then he went painfully home to his lodgings.

How singular would it be if this affair of the duel should pass away, and no one be a bit the wiser but those four men who had been with him on the sands at Blankenberg! Again he wondered at his own luck. He had told himself that a duel with Lord Chiltern must create a quarrel between him and Lord Chiltern's relations, and also between him and Violet Effingham; that it must banish him from his comfortable seat for Loughton, and ruin him in regard to his political prospects. And now he had fought his duel, and was back in town,—and the thing seemed to have been a thing of nothing. He had not as yet seen Lady Laura or Violet, but he had no doubt but they both were as much in the dark as other people. The day might arrive, he thought, on which it would be pleasant for him to tell Violet Effingham what had occurred, but that day had not come as yet. Whither Lord Chiltern had gone, or what Lord Chiltern intended to do, he had not any idea; but he imagined that he should soon hear something of her brother from Lady Laura. That

Lord Chiltern should say a word to Lady Laura of what had occurred,—or to any other person in the world,—he did not in the least suspect. There could be no man more likely to be reticent in such matters than Lord Chiltern,—or more sure to be guided by an almost exaggerated sense of what honour required of him. Nor did he doubt the discretion of his friend Fitzgibbon;—if only his friend might not damage the secret by being too discreet. Of the silence of the doctor and the captain he was by no means equally sure; but even though they should gossip, the gossiping would take so long a time in oozing out and becoming recognised information, as to have lost much of its power for injuring him. Were Lady Laura to hear at this moment that he had been over to Belgium, and had fought a duel with Lord Chiltern respecting Violet, she would probably feel herself obliged to quarrel with him; but no such obligation would rest on her, if in the course of six or nine months she should gradually have become aware that such an encounter had taken place.

Lord Chiltern, during their interview at the rooms in Great Marlborough Street, had said a word to him about the seat in Parliament;—had expressed some opinion that as he, Phineas Finn, was interfering with the views for the Standish family in regard to Miss Effingham, he ought not to keep the Standish seat, which had been conferred upon him in ignorance of any such intended interference. Phineas, as he thought of this, could not remember Lord Chiltern's words, but there was present to him an idea that such had been their purport. Was he bound, in circumstances as they now existed, to give up Loughton? He made

up his mind that he was not so bound unless Lord Chiltern should demand from him that he should do so; but, nevertheless, he was uneasy in his position. It was quite true that the seat now was his for this session by all parliamentary law, even though the electors themselves might wish to be rid of him, and that Lord Brentford could not even open his mouth upon the matter in a tone more loud than that of a whisper. But Phineas, feeling that he had consented to accept the favour of a corrupt seat from Lord Brentford, felt also that he was bound to give up the spoil if it were demanded from him. If it were demanded from him, either by the father or the son, it should be given up at once.

On the following morning he found a leading article in the People's Banner devoted solely to himself. "During the late debate,"—so ran a passage in the leading article, "Mr. Finn, Lord Brentford's Irish nominee for his pocket-borough at Loughton, did at last manage to stand on his legs and open his mouth. If we are not mistaken, this is Mr. Finn's third session in Parliament, and hitherto he has been unable to articulate three sentences, though he has on more than one occasion made the attempt. For what special merit this young man has been selected for aristocratic patronage we do not know,—but that there must be some merit recognisable by aristocratic eyes, we surmise. Three years ago he was a raw young Irishman, living in London as Irishmen only know how to live, earning nothing, and apparently without means; and then suddenly he burst out as a member of Parliament and as the friend of Cabinet Ministers. The possession of one good gift must be acceded to the honourable member

for Loughton,—he is a handsome young man, and looks to be as strong as a coal-porter. Can it be that his promotion has sprung from this? Be this as it may, we should like to know where he has been during his late mysterious absence from Parliament, and in what way he came by the wound in his arm. Even handsome young members of Parliament, fêted by titled ladies and their rich lords, are amenable to the laws,—to the laws of this country, and to the laws of any other which it may suit them to visit for a while!"

"Infamous scoundrel!" said Phineas to himself, as he read this. "Vile, low, disreputable blackguard!" It was clear enough, however, that Quintus Slide had found out something of his secret. If so, his only hope would rest on the fact that his friends were not likely to see the columns of the People's Banner.

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY LAURA IS TOLD.

By the time that Mr. Mildmay's great bill was going into committee Phineas was able to move about London in comfort,—with his arm, however, still in a sling. There had been nothing more about him and his wound in the People's Banner, and he was beginning to hope that that nuisance would also be allowed to die away. He had seen Lady Laura,—having dined in Grosvenor Place, where he had been petted to his heart's content. His dinner had been cut up for him, and his wound had been treated with the tenderest sympathy. And, singular to say, no questions were asked. He had been to Kent and had come by an accident. No more than that was told, and his dear sympathising friends were content to receive so much information, and to ask for no more. But he had not as yet seen Violet Effingham, and he was beginning to think that this romance about Violet might as well be brought to a close. He had not, however, as yet been able to go into crowded rooms, and unless he went out to large parties he could not be sure that he would meet Miss Effingham.

At last he resolved that he would tell Lady Laura the whole truth,—not the truth about the duel, but the truth about Violet Effingham, and ask for her assistance. When making this resolution, I think that he must have forgotten much that he had learned of his

friend's character; and by making it, I think that he showed also that he had not learned as much as his opportunities might have taught him. He knew Lady Laura's obstinacy of purpose, he knew her devotion to her brother, and he knew also how desirous she had been that her brother should win Violet Effingham for himself. This knowledge should, I think, have sufficed to show him how improbable it was that Lady Laura should assist him in his enterprise. But beyond all this was the fact,—a fact as to the consequences of which Phineas himself was entirely blind, beautifully ignorant,—that Lady Laura had once condescended to love himself. Nay;—she had gone farther than this, and had ventured to tell him, even after her marriage, that the remembrance of some feeling that had once dwelt in her heart in regard to him was still a danger to her. She had warned him from Loughlinter, and then had received him in London;—and now he selected her as his confidante in this love affair! Had he not been beautifully ignorant and most modestly blind, he would surely have placed his confidence elsewhere.

It was not that Lady Laura Kennedy ever confessed to herself the existence of a vicious passion. She had, indeed, learned to tell herself that she could not love her husband; and once, in the excitement of such silent announcements to herself, she had asked herself whether her heart was quite a blank, and had answered herself by desiring Phineas Finn to absent himself from Loughlinter. During all the subsequent winter she had scourged herself inwardly for her own imprudence, her quite unnecessary folly in so doing. What! could not she, Laura Standish, who from her earliest years of

girlish womanhood had resolved that she would use the world as men use it, and not as women do,—could not she have felt the slight shock of a passing tenderness for a handsome youth without allowing the feeling to be a rock before her big enough and sharp enough for the destruction of her entire barque? Could not she command, if not her heart, at any rate her mind, so that she might safely assure herself that, whether this man or any man was here or there, her course would be unaltered? What though Phineas Finn had been in the same house with her throughout all the winter, could not she have so lived with him on terms of friendship, that every deed and word and look of her friendship might have been open to her husband,—or open to all the world? She could have done so. She told herself that that was not,—need not have been her great calamity. Whether she could endure the dull, monotonous control of her slow but imperious lord,—or whether she must not rather tell him that it was not to be endured,—that was her trouble. So she told herself, and again admitted Phineas to her intimacy in London. But, nevertheless, Phineas, had he not been beautifully ignorant and most blind to his own achievements, would not have expected from Lady Laura Kennedy assistance with Miss Violet Effingham.

Phineas knew when to find Lady Laura alone, and he came upon her one day at the favourable hour. The two first clauses of the bill had been passed after twenty fights and endless divisions. Two points had been settled, as to which, however, Mr. Gresham had been driven to give way so far and to yield so much, that men declared that such a bill as the Government could consent to call its own could never be passed by that

Parliament in that session. Immediately on his entrance into her room Lady Laura began about the third clause. Would the House let Mr. Gresham have his way about the ——? Phineas stopped her at once. "My dear friend," he said, "I have come to you in a private trouble, and I want you to drop politics for half an hour. I have come to you for help."

"A private trouble, Mr. Finn! Is it serious?"

"It is very serious,—but it is no trouble of the kind of which you are thinking. But it is serious enough to take up every thought."

"Can I help you?"

"Indeed you can. Whether you will or no is a different thing."

"I would help you in anything in my power, Mr. Finn. Do you not know it?"

"You have been very kind to me!"

"And so would Mr. Kennedy."

"Mr. Kennedy cannot help me here."

"What is it, Mr. Finn?"

"I suppose I may as well tell you at once,—in plain language, I do not know how to put my story into words that shall fit it. I love Violet Effingham. Will you help me to win her to be my wife?"

"You love Violet Effingham!" said Lady Laura. And as she spoke the look of her countenance towards him was so changed that he became at once aware that from her no assistance might be expected. His eyes were not opened in any degree to the second reason above given for Lady Laura's opposition to his wishes, but he instantly perceived that she would still cling to that destination of Violet's hand which had for years past been the favourite scheme of her life. "Have

you not always known, Mr. Finn, what have been our hopes for Violet?"

Phineas, though he had perceived his mistake, felt that he must go on with his cause. Lady Laura must know his wishes sooner or later, and it was as well that she should learn them in this way as in any other. "Yes;—but I have known also, from your brother's own lips,—and indeed from yours also, Lady Laura, —that Chiltern has been three times refused by Miss Effingham."

"What does that matter? Do men never ask more than three times?"

"And must I be debarred forever while he prosecutes a hopeless suit?"

"Yes;—you of all men."

"Why so, Lady Laura?"

"Because in this matter you have been his chosen friend,—and mine. We have told you everything, trusting to you. We have believed in your honour. We have thought that with you, at any rate, we were safe." These words were very bitter to Phineas, and yet when he had written his letter at Loughton, he had intended to be so perfectly honest, chivalrously honest! Now Lady Laura spoke to him and looked at him as though he had been most basely false—most untrue to that noble friendship which had been lavished upon him by all her family. He felt that he would become the prey of her most injurious thoughts unless he could fully explain his ideas, and he felt, also, that the circumstances did not admit of his explaining them. He could not take up the argument on Violet's side, and show how unfair it would be to her that she should be debarred from the homage due to her by any man who

really loved her, because Lord Chiltern chose to think that he still had a claim,—or at any rate a chance. And Phineas knew well of himself,—or thought that he knew well,—that he would not have interfered had there been any chance for Lord Chiltern. Lord Chiltern had himself told him more than once that there was no such chance. How was he to explain all this to Lady Laura? "Mr. Finn," said Lady Laura, "I can hardly believe this of you, even when you tell it me yourself."

"Listen to me, Lady Laura, for a moment."

"Certainly, I will listen. But that you should come to me for assistance! I cannot understand it. Men sometimes become harder than stones."

"I do not think that I am hard." Poor blind fool! He was still thinking only of Violet, and of the accusation made against him that he was untrue to his friendship for Lord Chiltern. Of that other accusation which could not be expressed in open words he understood nothing,—nothing at all as yet.

"Hard and false,—capable of receiving no impression beyond the outside husk of the heart."

"Oh, Lady Laura, do not say that. If you could only know how true I am in my affection for you all."

"And how do you show it?—by coming in between Oswald and the only means that are open to us of reconciling him to his father;—means that have been explained to you exactly as though you had been one of ourselves. Oswald has treated you as a brother in the matter, telling you everything, and this is the way you would repay him for his confidence!"

"Can I help it, that I have learnt to love this girl?"

"Yes, sir,—you can help it. What if she had been

Oswald's wife;—would you have loved her then? Do you speak of loving a woman as if it were an affair of fate, over which you have no control? I doubt whether your passions are so strong as that. You had better put aside your love for Miss Effingham. I feel assured that it will never hurt you." Then some remembrance of what had passed between him and Lady Laura Standish near the falls of the Linter, when he first visited Scotland, came across his mind. "Believe me," she said with a smile, "this little wound in your heart will soon be cured."

He stood silent before her, looking away from her, thinking over it all. He certainly had believed himself to be violently in love with Lady Laura, and yet when he had just now entered her drawing-room, he had almost forgotten that there had been such a passage in his life. And he had believed that she had forgotten it,—even though she had counselled him not to come to Loughlinter within the last nine months! He had been a boy then, and had not known himself;—but now he was a man, and was proud of the intensity of his love. There came upon him some passing throb of pain from his shoulder, reminding him of the duel, and he was proud also of that. He had been willing to risk everything,—life, prospects, and position,—sooner than abandon the slight hope which was his of possessing Violet Effingham. And now he was told that this wound in his heart would soon be cured, and was told so by a woman to whom he had once sung a song of another passion. It is very hard to answer a woman in such circumstances, because her womanhood gives her so strong a ground of vantage! Lady Laura might venture to throw in his teeth the fickleness of

his heart, but he could not in reply tell her that to change a love was better than to marry without love, —that to be capable of such a change showed no such inferiority of nature as did the capacity for such a marriage. She could hit him with her argument; but he could only remember his, and think how violent might be the blow he could inflict,—if it were not that she were a woman, and therefore guarded. "You will not help me then?" he said, when they had both been silent for a while.

"Help you? How should I help you?"

"I wanted no other help than this,—that I might have had an opportunity of meeting Violet here, and of getting from her some answer."

"Has the question then never been asked already?" said Lady Laura. To this Phineas made no immediate reply. There was no reason why he should show his whole hand to an adversary. "Why do you not go to Lady Baldock's house?" continued Lady Laura. "You are admitted there. You know Lady Baldock. Go and ask her to stand your friend with her niece. See what she will say to you. As far as I understand these matters, that is the fair, honourable, open way in which gentlemen are wont to make their overtures."

"I would make mine to none but to herself," said Phineas.

"Then why have you made it to me, sir?" demanded Lady Laura.

"I have come to you as I would to my sister."

"Your sister? Psha! I am not your sister, Mr. Finn. Nor, were I so, should I fail to remember that I have a dearer brother to whom my faith is pledged. Look here. Within the last three weeks Oswald has

sacrificed everything to his father, because he was determined that Mr. Kennedy should have the money which he thought was due to my husband. He has enabled my father to do what he will with Saulsby. Papa will never hurt him;—I know that. Hard as papa is with him, he will never hurt Oswald's future position. Papa is too proud to do that. Violet has heard what Oswald has done; and now that he has nothing of his own to offer her for the future but his bare title, now that he has given papa power to do what he will with the property, I believe that she would accept him instantly. That is her disposition."

Phineas again paused a moment before he replied. "Let him try," he said.

"He is away,—in Brussels."

"Send to him, and bid him return. I will be patient, Lady Laura. Let him come and try, and I will bide my time. I confess that I have no right to interfere with him if there be a chance for him. If there is no chance, my right is as good as that of any other."

There was something in this which made Lady Laura feel that she could not maintain her hostility against this man on behalf of her brother;—and yet she could not force herself to be other than hostile to him. Her heart was sore, and it was he that had made it sore. She had lectured herself, schooling herself with mental sackcloth and ashes, rebuking herself with heaviest censures from day to day, because she had found herself to be in danger of regarding this man with a perilous love; and she had been constant in this work of penance till she had been able to assure herself that the sackcloth and ashes had done their work, and that the danger was past. "I like him still and love him well,"

she had said to herself with something almost of triumph, "but I have ceased to think of him as one who might have been my lover." And yet she was now sick and sore, almost beside herself with the agony of the wound, because this man whom she had been able to throw aside from her heart had also been able so to throw her aside. And she felt herself constrained to rebuke him with what bitterest words she might use. She had felt it easy to do this at first, on her brother's score. She had accused him of treachery to his friendship,—both as to Oswald and as to herself. On that she could say cutting words without subjecting herself to suspicion even from herself. But now this power was taken away from her, and still she wished to wound him. She desired to taunt him with his old fickleness, and yet to subject herself to no imputation. "Your right!" she said. "What gives you any right in the matter?"

"Simply the right of a fair field, and no favour."

"And yet you come to me for favour,—to me, because I am her friend. You cannot win her yourself, and think I may help you! I do not believe in your love for her. There! If there were no other reason, and I could help you, I would not, because I think your heart is a sham heart. She is pretty, and has money——"

"Lady Laura!"

"She is pretty, and has money, and is the fashion. I do not wonder that you should wish to have her. But, Mr. Finn, I believe that Oswald really loves her; —and that you do not. His nature is deeper than yours."

He understood it all now as he listened to the tone

of her voice, and looked into the lines of her face. There was written there plainly enough that spretæ injuria formæ of which she herself was conscious, but only conscious. Even his eyes, blind as he had been, were opened,—and he knew that he had been a fool.

"I am sorry that I came to you," he said.

"It would have been better that you should not have done so," she replied.

"And yet perhaps it is well that there should be no misunderstanding between us."

"Of course I must tell my brother."

He paused but for a moment, and then he answered her with a sharp voice, "He has been told."

"And who told him?"

"I did. I wrote to him the moment that I knew my own mind. I owed it to him to do so. But my letter missed him, and he only learned it the other day."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Yes;—I have seen him."

"And what did he say? How did he take it? Did he bear it from you quietly?"

"No, indeed;" and Phineas smiled as he spoke.

"Tell me, Mr. Finn; what happened? What is to be done?"

"Nothing is to be done. Everything has been done. I may as well tell you all. I am sure that for the sake of me, as well as of your brother, you will keep our secret. He required that I should either give up my suit, or that I should,—fight him. As I could not comply with the one request, I found myself bound to comply with the other."

"And there has been a duel?"

"Yes;—there has been a duel. We went over to

Belgium, and it was soon settled. He wounded me here in the arm."

"Suppose you had killed him, Mr. Finn?"

"That, Lady Laura, would have been a misfortune so terrible that I was bound to prevent it." Then he paused again, regretting what he had said. "You have surprised me, Lady Laura, into an answer that I should not have made. I may be sure,—may I not,—that my words will not go beyond yourself?"

"Yes;—you may be sure of that." This she said plaintively, with a tone of voice and demeanour of body altogether different from that which she lately bore. Neither of them knew what was taking place between them; but she was, in truth, gradually submitting herself again to this man's influence. Though she rebuked him at every turn for what he said, for what he had done, for what he proposed to do, still she could not teach herself to despise him, or even to cease to love him for any part of it. She knew it all now,—except that word or two which had passed between Violet and Phineas in the rides of Saulsby Park. But she suspected something even of that, feeling sure that the only matter on which Phineas would say nothing would be that of his own success,—if success there had been. "And so you and Oswald have quarrelled, and there has been a duel. That is why you were away?"

"That is why I was away."

"How wrong of you,—how very wrong! Had he been,—killed, how could you have looked us in the face again?"

"I could not have looked you in the face again."

"But that is over now. And were you friends afterwards?"

"No;—we did not part as friends. Having gone there to fight with him,—most unwillingly,—I could not afterwards promise him that I would give up Miss Effingham. You say she will accept him now. Let him come and try." She had nothing further to say, no other argument to use. There was the soreness at her heart still present to her, making her wretched, instigating her to hurt him if she knew how to do so, in spite of her regard for him. But she felt that she was weak and powerless. She had shot her arrows at him,—all but one,—and if she used that, its poisoned point would wound herself far more surely than it would touch him. "The duel was very silly," he said. "You will not speak of it."

"No; certainly not."

"I am glad at least that I have told you everything."

"I do not know why you should be glad. I cannot help you."

"And you will say nothing to Violet?"

"Everything that I can say in Oswald's favour. I will say nothing of the duel; but beyond that you have no right to demand my secrecy with her. Yes; you had better go, Mr. Finn, for I am hardly well. And remember this,—if you can forget this little episode about Miss Effingham, so will I forget it also; and so will Oswald. I can promise for him." Then she smiled and gave him her hand, and he went.

She rose from her chair as he left the room, and waited till she heard the sound of the great door closing behind him before she again sat down. Then, when he was gone,—when she was sure that he was no longer there with her in the same house,—she laid her head down upon the arm of the sofa, and burst into a

flood of tears. She was no longer angry with Phineas. There was no further longing in her heart for revenge. She did not now desire to injure him, though she had done so as long as he was with her. Nay,—she resolved instantly, almost instinctively, that Lord Brentford must know nothing of all this, lest the political prospects of the young member for Loughton should be injured. To have rebuked him, to rebuke him again and again, would be only fair,—would at least be womanly; but she would protect him from all material injury as far as her power of protection might avail. And why was she weeping now so bitterly? Of course she asked herself, as she rubbed away the tears with her hands,—Why should she weep? She was not weak enough to tell herself that she was weeping for any injury that had been done to Oswald. She got up suddenly from the sofa, and pushed away her hair from her face, and pushed away the tears from her cheeks, and then clenched her fists as she held them out at full length from her body, and stood, looking up with her eyes fixed upon the wall. "Ass!" she exclaimed. "Fool! Idiot! That I should not be able to crush it into nothing and have done with it! Why should he not have her? After all, he is better than Oswald. Oh,—is that you?" The door of the room had been opened while she was standing thus, and her husband had entered.

"Yes,—it is I. Is anything wrong?"

"Very much is wrong."

"What is it, Laura?"

"You cannot help me."

"If you are in trouble you should tell me what it is, and leave it to me to try to help you."

"Nonsense!" she said, shaking her head.

"Laura, that is uncourteous,—not to say undutiful also."

"I suppose it was,—both. I beg your pardon, but I could not help it."

"Laura, you should help such words to me."

"There are moments, Robert, when even a married woman must be herself rather than her husband's wife. It is so, though you cannot understand it."

"I certainly do not understand it."

"You cannot make a woman subject to you as a dog is so. You may have all the outside and as much of the inside as you can master. With a dog you may be sure of both."

"I suppose this means that you have secrets in which I am not to share."

"I have troubles about my father and my brother which you cannot share. My brother is a ruined man."

"Who ruined him?"

"I will not talk about it any more. I will not speak to you of him or of papa. I only want you to understand that there is a subject which must be secret to myself, and on which I may be allowed to shed tears,—if I am so weak. I will not trouble you on a matter in which I have not your sympathy." Then she left him, standing in the middle of the room, depressed by what had occurred,—but not thinking of it as of a trouble which would do more than make him uncomfortable for that day.

CHAPTER XV.

MADAME MAX GOESLER.

Day after day, and clause after clause, the bill was fought in committee, and few men fought with more constancy on the side of the Ministers than did the member for Loughton. Troubled though he was by his quarrel with Lord Chiltern, by his love for Violet Effingham, by the silence of his friend Lady Laura,—for since he had told her of the duel she had become silent to him, never writing to him, and hardly speaking to him when she met him in society,—nevertheless Phineas was not so troubled but what he could work at his vocation. Now, when he would find himself upon his legs in the House, he would wonder at the hesitation which had lately troubled him so sorely. He would sit sometimes and speculate upon that dimness of eye, upon that tendency of things to go round, upon that obtrusive palpitation of heart which had afflicted him so seriously for so long a time. The House now was no more to him than any other chamber, and the members no more than other men. He guarded himself from orations, speaking always very shortly,—because he believed that policy and good judgment required that he should be short. But words were very easy to him, and he would feel as though he could talk forever. And then quickly came to him a reputation for practical usefulness. He was a man with strong opinions, who could yet be submissive. And no man

seemed to know how his reputation had come. He had made one good speech after two or three failures. All who knew him, his whole party, had been aware of his failure; and his one good speech had been regarded by many as no very wonderful effort. But he was a man who was pleasant to other men,—not combative, not self-asserting beyond the point at which self-assertion ceases to be a necessity of manliness. Nature had been very good to him, making him comely inside and out,—and with this comeliness he had crept into popularity.

The secret of the duel was, I think, at this time, known to a great many men and women. So Phineas perceived; but it was not, he thought, known either to Lord Brentford or to Violet Effingham. And in this he was right. No rumour of it had yet reached the ears of either of these persons;—and rumour, though she flies so fast and so far, is often slow in reaching those ears which would be most interested in her tidings. Some dim report of the duel reached even Mr. Kennedy, and he asked his wife. "Who told you?" said she sharply.

"Bonteen told me that it was certainly so."

"Mr. Bonteen always knows more than anybody else about everything except his own business."

"Then it is not true?"

Lady Laura paused,—and then she lied. "Of course it is not true. I should be very sorry to ask either of them, but to me it seems to be the most improbable thing in life." Then Mr. Kennedy believed that there had been no duel. In his wife's word he put absolute faith, and he thought that she would certainly know anything that her brother had done. As he was

a man given to but little discourse, he asked no further questions about the duel either in the House or at the Clubs.

At first, Phineas had been greatly dismayed when men had asked him questions tending to elicit from him some explanation of the mystery;—but by degrees he became used to it, and as the tidings which had got abroad did not seem to injure him, and as the questionings were not pushed very closely, he became indifferent. There came out another article in the People's Banner in which Lord C——n and Mr. P——s F——n were spoken of as glaring examples of that aristocratic snobility,—that was the expressive word coined, evidently with great delight, for the occasion, —which the rotten state of London society in high quarters now produced. Here was a young lord, infamously notorious, quarrelling with one of his boon-companions, whom he had appointed to a private seat in the House of Commons, fighting duels, breaking the laws, scandalising the public,—and all this was done without punishment to the guilty! There were old stories afloat,—so said the article,—of what in a former century had been done by Lord Mohuns and Mr. Bests; but now, in 186—, etc. etc. etc. And so the article went on. Any reader may fill in without difficulty the concluding indignation and virtuous appeal for reform in social morals as well as Parliament. But Phineas had so far progressed that he had almost come to like this kind of thing.

Certainly I think that the duel did him no harm in society. Otherwise he would hardly have been asked to a semi-political dinner at Lady Glencora Palliser's, even though he might have been invited to make one

of the five hundred guests who were crowded into her salons and staircases after the dinner was over. To have been one of the five hundred was nothing; but to be one of the sixteen was a great deal,—was indeed so much that Phineas, not understanding as yet the advantage of his own comeliness, was at a loss to conceive why so pleasant an honour was conferred upon him. There was no man among the eight men at the dinner-party not in Parliament,—and the only other except Phineas not attached to the Government was Mr. Palliser's great friend, John Grey, the member for Silverbridge. There were four Cabinet Ministers in the room,—the Duke, Lord Cantrip, Mr. Gresham, and the owner of the mansion. There was also Barrington Erle and young Lord Fawn, an Under-Secretary of State. But the wit and grace of the ladies present lent more of character to the party than even the position of the men. Lady Glencora Palliser herself was a host. There was no woman then in London better able to talk to a dozen people on a dozen subjects; and then, moreover, she was still in the flush of her beauty and the bloom of her youth. Lady Laura was there;—by what means divided from her husband Phineas could not imagine; but Lady Glencora was good at such divisions. Lady Cantrip had been allowed to come with her lord;—but, as was well understood, Lord Cantrip was not so manifestly a husband as was Mr. Kennedy. There are men who cannot guard themselves from the assertion of marital rights at most inappropriate moments. Now Lord Cantrip lived with his wife most happily; yet you should pass hours with him and her together, and hardly know that they knew each other. One of the Duke's daughters was there,—

but not the Duchess, who was known to be heavy;—and there was the beauteous Marchioness of Hartletop. Violet Effingham was in the room also,—giving Phineas a blow at the heart as he saw her smile. Might it be that he could speak a word to her on this occasion? Mr. Grey had also brought his wife;—and then there was Madame Max Goesler. Phineas found that it was his fortune to take down to dinner,—not Violet Effingham, but Madame Max Goesler. And, when he was placed at dinner, on the other side of him there sat Lady Hartletop, who addressed the few words which she spoke exclusively to Mr. Palliser. There had been in former days matters difficult of arrangement between those two; but I think that those old passages had now been forgotten by them both. Phineas was, therefore, driven to depend exclusively on Madame Max Goesler for conversation, and he found that he was not called upon to cast his seed into barren ground.

Up to that moment he had never heard of Madame Max Goesler. Lady Glencora, in introducing them, had pronounced the lady's name so clearly that he had caught it with accuracy, but he could not surmise whence she had come, or why she was there. She was a woman probably something over thirty years of age. She had thick black hair, which she wore in curls,—unlike anybody else in the world,—in curls which hung down low beneath her face, covering, and perhaps intended to cover, a certain thinness in her cheeks which would otherwise have taken something from the charm of her countenance. Her eyes were large, of a dark blue colour, and very bright,—and she used them in a manner which is as yet hardly common with English-

women. She seemed to intend that you should know that she employed them to conquer you, looking as a knight may have looked in olden days who entered a chamber with his sword drawn from the scabbard and in his hand. Her forehead was broad and somewhat low. Her nose was not classically beautiful, being broader at the nostrils than beauty required, and, moreover, not perfectly straight in its line. Her lips were thin. Her teeth, which she endeavoured to show as little as possible, were perfect in form and colour. They who criticised her severely said, however, that they were too large. Her chin was well formed, and divided by a dimple which gave to her face a softness of grace which would otherwise have been much missed. But perhaps her great beauty was in the brilliant clearness of her dark complexion. You might almost fancy that you could see into it so as to read the different lines beneath the skin. She was somewhat tall, though by no means tall to a fault, and was so thin as to be almost meagre in her proportions. She always wore her dress close up to her neck, and never showed the bareness of her arms. Though she was the only woman so clad now present in the room, this singularity did not specially strike one, because in other respects her apparel was so rich and quaint as to make inattention to it impossible. The observer who did not observe very closely would perceive that Madame Max Goesler's dress was unlike the dress of other women, but seeing that it was unlike in make, unlike in colour, and unlike in material, the ordinary observer would not see also that it was unlike in form for any other purpose than that of maintaining its general peculiarity of

character. In colour she was abundant, and yet the fabric of her garment was always black. My pen may not dare to describe the traceries of yellow and ruby silk which went in and out through the black lace, across her bosom, and round her neck, and over her shoulders, and along her arms, and down to the very ground at her feet, robbing the black stuff of all its sombre solemnity, and producing a brightness in which there was nothing gaudy. She wore no vestige of crinoline, and hardly anything that could be called a train. And the lace sleeves of her dress, with their bright traceries of silk, were fitted close to her arms; and round her neck she wore the smallest possible collar of lace, above which there was a short chain of Roman gold with a ruby pendant. And she had rubies in her ears, and a ruby brooch, and rubies in the bracelets on her arms. Such, as regarded the outward woman, was Madame Max Goesler; and Phineas, as he took his place by her side, thought that fortune for the nonce had done well with him,—only that he should have liked it so much better could he have been seated next to Violet Effingham!

I have said that in the matter of conversation his morsel of seed was not thrown into barren ground. I do not know that he can truly be said to have produced even a morsel. The subjects were all mooted by the lady, and so great was her fertility in discoursing that all conversational grasses seemed to grow with her spontaneously. "Mr. Finn," she said, "what would I not give to be a member of the British Parliament at such a moment as this!"

"Why at such a moment as this particularly?"

"Because there is something to be done, which, let

me tell you, senator though you are, is not always the case with you."

"My experience is short, but it sometimes seems to me that there is too much to be done."

"Too much of nothingness, Mr. Finn. Is not that the case? But now there is a real fight in the lists. The one great drawback to the life of women is that they cannot act in politics."

"And which side would you take?"

"What, here in England?" said Madame Max Goesler,—from which expression, and from one or two others of a similar nature, Phineas was led into a doubt whether the lady were a country-woman of his or not. "Indeed, it is hard to say. Politically I should want to out-Turnbull Mr. Turnbull, to vote for everything that could be voted for,—ballot, manhood suffrage, womanhood suffrage, unlimited right of striking, tenant right, education of everybody, annual Parliaments, and the abolition of at least the bench of bishops."

"That is a strong programme," said Phineas.

"It is strong, Mr. Finn, but that 's what I should like. I think, however, that I should be tempted to feel a dastard security in the conviction that I might advocate my views without any danger of seeing them carried out. For, to tell you the truth, I don't at all want to put down ladies and gentlemen."

"You think that they would go with the bench of bishops?"

"I don't want anything to go,—that is, as far as real life is concerned. There 's that dear good Bishop of Abingdon is the best friend I have in the world,—and as for the Bishop of Dorchester, I 'd walk from here to there to hear him preach. And I 'd sooner hem

aprons for them all myself than that they should want those pretty decorations. But then, Mr. Finn, there is such a difference between life and theory;—is there not?"

"And it is so comfortable to have theories that one is not bound to carry out," said Phineas.

"Is n't it? Mr. Palliser, do you live up to your political theories?" At this moment Mr. Palliser was sitting perfectly silent between Lady Hartletop and the Duke's daughter, and he gave a little spring in his chair as this sudden address was made to him. "Your House of Commons theories, I mean, Mr. Palliser. Mr. Finn is saying that it is very well to have far-advanced ideas,—it does not matter how far advanced,—because one is never called upon to act upon them practically."

"That is a dangerous doctrine, I think," said Mr. Palliser.

"But pleasant,—so at least Mr. Finn says."

"It is at least very common," said Phineas, not caring to protect himself by a contradition.

"For myself," said Mr. Palliser gravely, "I think I may say that I always am really anxious to carry into practice all those doctrines of policy which I advocate in theory."

During this conversation Lady Hartletop sat as though no word of it reached her ears. She did not understand Madame Max Goesler, and by no means loved her. Mr. Palliser, when he had made his little speech, turned to the Duke's daughter and asked some question about the conservatories at Longroyston.

"I have called forth a word of wisdom," said Madame Max Goesler, almost in a whisper.

"Yes," said Phineas, "and taught a Cabinet Minister to believe that I am a most unsound politician. You may have ruined my prospects for life, Madame Max Goesler."

"Let me hope not. As far as I can understand the way of things in your Government, the aspirants to office succeed chiefly by making themselves uncommonly unpleasant to those who are in power. If a man can hit hard enough he is sure to be taken into the elysium of the Treasury Bench,—not that he may hit others, but that he may cease to hit those who are there. I don't think men are chosen because they are useful."

"You are very severe upon us all."

"Indeed, as far as I can see, one man is as useful as another. But to put aside joking,—they tell me that you are sure to become a Minister."

Phineas felt that he blushed. Could it be that people said of him behind his back that he was a man likely to rise high in political position? "Your informants are very kind," he replied awkwardly, "but I do not know who they are. I shall never get up in the way you describe,—that is, by abusing the men I support."

After that Madame Max Goesler turned round to Mr. Grey, who was sitting on the other side of her, and Phineas was left for a moment in silence. He tried to say a word to Lady Hartletop, but Lady Hartletop only bowed her head gracefully in recognition of the truth of the statement he made. So he applied himself for a while to his dinner.

"What do you think of Miss Effingham?" said Madame Max Goesler, again addressing him suddenly.

"What do I think about her?"

"You know her, I suppose."

"Oh yes, I know her. She is closely connected with the Kennedys, who are friends of mine."

"So I have heard. They tell me that scores of men are raving about her. Are you one of them?"

"Oh yes;—I don't mind being one of sundry scores. There is nothing particular in owning to that."

"But you admire her?"

"Of course I do," said Phineas.

"Ah, I see you are joking. I do amazingly. They say women never do admire women, but I most sincerely do admire Miss Effingham."

"Is she a friend of yours?"

"Oh no;—I must not dare to say so much as that. I was with her last winter for a week at Matching, and of course I meet her about at people's houses. She seems to me to be the most independent girl I ever knew in my life. I do believe that nothing would make her marry a man unless she loved him and honoured him, and I think it is so very seldom that you can say that of a girl."

"I believe so also," said Phineas. Then he paused a moment before he continued to speak. "I cannot say that I know Miss Effingham very intimately, but from what I have seen of her, I should think it very probable that she may not marry at all."

"Very probably," said Madame Max Goesler, who then again turned away to Mr. Grey.

Ten minutes after this, when the moment was just at hand in which the ladies were to retreat, Madame Max Goesler again addressed Phineas, looking very full into his face as she did so. "I wonder whether the time will ever come, Mr. Finn, in which you will

give me an account of that day's journey to Blankenberg?"

"To Blankenberg!"

"Yes;—to Blankenberg. I am not asking for it now. But I shall look for it some day." Then Lady Glencora rose from her seat, and Madame Max Goesler went out with the others.

CHAPTER XVI.

LORD FAWN.

What had Madame Max Goesler to do with his journey to Blankenberg? thought Phineas, as he sat for a while in silence between Mr. Palliser and Mr. Grey; and why should she, who was a perfect stranger to him, have dared to ask him such a question? But as the conversation round the table, after the ladies had gone, soon drifted into politics and became general, Phineas, for a while, forgot Madame Max Goesler and the Blankenberg journey, and listened to the eager words of Cabinet Ministers, now and again uttering a word of his own, and showing that he, too, was as eager as others. But the session in Mr. Palliser's dining-room was not long, and Phineas soon found himself making his way amidst a throng of coming guests into the rooms above. His object was to meet Violet Effingham, but, failing that, he would not be unwilling to say a few more words to Madame Max Goesler.

He first encountered Lady Laura, to whom he had not spoken as yet, and, finding himself standing close to her for a while, he asked her after his late neighbour. "Do tell me one thing, Lady Laura;—who is Madame Max Goesler, and why have I never met her before?"

"That will be two things, Mr. Finn; but I will answer both questions as well as I can. You have not met her before, because she was in Germany last spring and summer, and in the year before that you were not

about so much as you have been since. Still you must have seen her, I think. She is the widow of an Austrian banker, and has lived the greater part of her life at Vienna. She is very rich, and has a small house in Park Lane, where she receives people so exclusively that it has come to be thought an honour to be invited by Madame Max Goesler. Her enemies say that her father was a German Jew, living in England, in the employment of the Viennese bankers, and they say also that she has been married a second time to an Austrian count, to whom she allows ever so much a year to stay away from her. But of all this, nobody, I fancy, knows anything. What they do know is that Madame Max Goesler spends seven or eight thousand a year, and that she will give no man an opportunity of even asking her to marry him. People used to be shy of her, but she goes almost everywhere now."

"She has not been at Portman Square?"

"Oh no; but then Lady Glencora is so much more advanced than we are! After all, we are but humdrum people, as the world goes now."

Then Phineas began to roam about the rooms, striving to find an opportunity of engrossing five minutes of Miss Effingham's attention. During the time that Lady Laura was giving him the history of Madame Max Goesler his eyes had wandered round, and he had perceived that Violet was standing in the further corner of a large lobby on to which the stairs opened,—so situated, indeed, that she could hardly escape, because of the increasing crowd, but on that very account almost impossible to be reached. He could see, also, that she was talking to Lord Fawn, an unmarried peer of something over thirty years of age, with an unrivalled pair

of whiskers, a small estate, and a rising political reputation. Lord Fawn had been talking to Violet through the whole dinner, and Phineas was beginning to think that he should like to make another journey to Blankenberg, with the object of meeting his lordship on the sands. When Lady Laura had done speaking, his eyes were turned through a large open doorway towards the spot on which his idol was standing. "It is of no use, my friend," she said, touching his arm. "I wish I could make you know that it is of no use, because then I think you would be happier." To this Phineas made no answer, but went and roamed about the rooms. Why should it be of no use? Would Violet Effingham marry any man merely because he was a lord?

Some half-hour after this he had succeeded in making his way up to the place in which Violet was still standing, with Lord Fawn beside her. "I have been making such a struggle to get to you," he said.

"And now you are here, you will have to stay, for it is impossible to get out," she answered. "Lord Fawn has made the attempt half-a-dozen times, but has failed grievously."

"I have been quite contented," said Lord Fawn;—"more than contented."

Phineas felt that he ought to give some special reason to Miss Effingham to account for his efforts to reach her, but yet he had nothing special to say. Had Lord Fawn not been there, he would immediately have told her that he was waiting for an answer to the question he had asked her in Saulsby Park, but he could hardly do this in presence of the noble Under-Secretary of State. She received him with her pleasant genial smile, looking exactly as she had looked when he had parted

from her on the morning after their ride. She did not show any sign of anger, or even of indifference, at his approach. But still it was almost necessary that he should account for his search of her. "I have so longed to hear from you how you got on at Loughlinter," he said.

"Yes,—yes; and I will tell you something of it some day, perhaps. Why do you not come to Lady Baldock's?"

"I did not even known that Lady Baldock was in town."

"You ought to have known. Of course she is in town. Where did you suppose I was living? Lord Fawn was there yesterday, and can tell you that my aunt is quite blooming."

"Lady Baldock is blooming," said Lord Fawn; "certainly blooming;—that is, if evergreens may be said to bloom."

"Evergreens do bloom, as well as spring plants, Lord Fawn. You come and see her, Mr. Finn;—only you must bring a little money with you for the Female Protestant Unmarried Women's Emigration Society. That is my aunt's present hobby, as Lord Fawn knows to his cost."

"I wish I may never spend half-a-sovereign worse."

"But it is a perilous affair for me, as my aunt wants me to go out as a sort of leading Protestant unmarried female emigrant pioneer myself."

"You don't mean that," said Lord Fawn, with much anxiety.

"Of course you 'll go," said Phineas. "I should, if I were you."

"I am in doubt," said Violet.

"It is such a grand prospect," said he. "Such an opening in life. So much excitement, you know; and such a useful career."

"As if there were not plenty of opening here for Miss Effingham," said Lord Fawn, "and plenty of excitement."

"Do you think there is?" said Violet. "You are much more civil than Mr. Finn, I must say." Then Phineas began to hope that he need not be afraid of Lord Fawn. "What a happy man you were at dinner!" continued Violet, addressing herself to Phineas.

"I thought Lord Fawn was the happy man."

"You had Madame Max Goesler all to yourself for nearly two hours, and I suppose there was not a creature in the room who did not envy you. I don't doubt that ever so much interest was made with Lady Glencora as to taking Madame Max down to dinner. Lord Fawn, I know, intrigued."

"Miss Effingham, really I must——contradict you."

"And Barrington Erle begged for it as a particular favour. The Duke, with a sigh, owned that it was impossible, because of his cumbrous rank; and Mr. Gresham, when it was offered to him, declared that he was fatigued with the business of the House, and not up to the occasion. How much did she say to you; and what did she talk about?"

"The ballot chiefly,—that, and manhood suffrage."

"Ah! she said something more than that, I am sure. Madame Max Goesler never lets any man go without entrancing him. If you have anything near your heart, Mr. Finn, Madame Max Goesler touched it, I am sure." Now Phineas had two things near his heart,—political promotion and Violet Effingham,—and Madame Max

Goesler had managed to touch them both. She had asked him respecting his journey to Blankenberg, and had touched him very nearly in reference to Miss Effingham. "You know Madame Max Goesler, of course?" said Violet to Lord Fawn.

"Oh yes, I know the lady;—that is, as well as other people do. No one, I take it, knows much of her; and it seems to me that the world is becoming tired of her. A mystery is good for nothing if it remains always a mystery."

"And it is good for nothing at all when it is found out," said Violet.

"And therefore it is that Madame Max Goesler is a bore," said Lord Fawn.

"You did not find her a bore?" said Violet. Then Phineas, choosing to oppose Lord Fawn as well as he could on that matter, as on every other, declared that he had found Madame Max Goesler most delightful. "And beautiful,—is she not?" said Violet.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Lord Fawn.

"I think her very beautiful," said Phineas.

"So do I," said Violet. "And she is a dear ally of mine. We were a week together last winter, and swore an undying friendship. She told me ever so much about Mr. Goesler."

"But she told you nothing of her second husband?" said Lord Fawn.

"Now that you have run into scandal, I shall have done," said Violet.

Half an hour after this, when Phineas was preparing to fight his way out of the house, he was again close to Madame Max Goesler. He had not found a single moment in which to ask Violet for an answer to his old

question, and was retiring from the field discomfited, but not dispirited. Lord Fawn, he thought, was not a serious obstacle in his way. Lady Laura had told him that there was no hope for him; but then Lady Laura's mind on that subject was, he thought, prejudiced. Violet Effingham certainly knew what were his wishes, and knowing them, smiled on him and was gracious to him. Would she do so if his pretensions were thoroughly objectionable to her?

"I saw that you were successful this evening," said Madame Max Goesler to him.

"I was not aware of any success."

"I call it great success to be able to make your way where you will through such a crowd as there is here. You seem to me to be so stout a cavalier that I shall ask you to find my servant, and bid him get my carriage. Will you mind?" Phineas, of course, declared that he would be delighted. "He is a German, and not in livery. But if somebody will call out, he will hear. He is very sharp, and much more attentive than your English footmen. An Englishman hardly ever makes a good servant."

"Is that a compliment to us Britons?"

"No, certainly not. If a man is a servant, he should be clever enough to be a good one." Phineas had now given the order for the carriage, and, having returned, was standing with Madame Max Goesler in the cloak-room. "After all, we are surely the most awkward people in the world," she said. "You know Lord Fawn, who was talking to Miss Effingham just now. You should have heard him trying to pay me a compliment before dinner. It was like a donkey walking a minuet, and yet they say he is a clever man and

can make speeches." Could it be possible that Madame Max Goesler's ears were so sharp that she had heard the things which Lord Fawn had said of her?

"He is a well-informed man," said Phineas.

"For a lord, you mean," said Madame Max Goesler. "But he is an oaf, is he not? And yet they say he is to marry that girl."

"I do not think he will," said Phineas stoutly.

"I hope not, with all my heart; and I hope that somebody else may,—unless somebody else should change his mind. Thank you; I am so much obliged to you. Mind you come and call on me,—193, Park Lane. I dare say you know the little cottage." Then he put Madame Max Goesler into her carriage, and walked away to his club.

CHAPTER XVII.

LADY BALDOCK DOES NOT SEND A CARD TO PHINEAS FINN.

Lady Baldock's house in Berkeley Square was very stately,—a large house with five front windows in a row, and a big door, and a huge square hall, and a fat porter in a round-topped chair;—but it was dingy and dull, and could not have been painted for the last ten years, or furnished for the last twenty. Nevertheless, Lady Baldock had "evenings," and people went to them,—though not such a crowd of people as would go to the evenings of Lady Glencora. Now Mr. Phineas Finn had not been asked to the evenings of Lady Baldock for the present season, and the reason was after this wise.

"Yes, Mr. Finn," Lady Baldock had said to her daughter, who, early in the spring, was preparing the cards. "You may send one to Mr. Finn, certainly."

"I don't know that he is very nice," said Augusta Boreham, whose eyes at Saulsby had been sharper perhaps than her mother's, and who had her suspicions.

But Lady Baldock did not like interference from her daughter. "Mr. Finn, certainly," she continued. "They tell me that he is a very rising young man, and he sits for Lord Brentford's borough. Of course he is a radical, but we cannot help that. All the rising young men are radicals now. I thought him very civil at Saulsby."

"But, mamma——"

"Well!"

"Don't you think that he is a little free with Violet?"

"What on earth do you mean, Augusta?"

"Have you not fancied that he is——fond of her?"

"Good gracious, no!"

"I think he is. And I have sometimes fancied that she is fond of him, too."

"I don't believe a word of it, Augusta,—not a word. I should have seen it if it was so. I am very sharp in seeing such things. They never escape me. Even Violet would not be such a fool as that. Send him a card, and if he comes I shall soon see." Miss Boreham quite understood her mother, though she could never master her,—and the card was prepared. Miss Boreham could never master her mother by her own efforts; but it was, I think, by a little intrigue on her part that Lady Baldock was mastered, and, indeed, altogether cowed, in reference to our hero, and that this victory was gained on that very afternoon in time to prevent the sending of the card.

When the mother and daughter were at tea, before dinner, Lord Baldock came into the room, and, after having been patted and petted and praised by his mother, he took up all the cards out of a china bowl and ran his eyes over them. "Lord Fawn!" he said, "the greatest ass in all London! Lady Hartletop! you know she won't come." "I don't see why she should n't come," said Lady Baldock;—"a mere country clergyman's daughter!" "Julius Cæsar Conway;—a great friend of mine, and therefore he always blackballs my other friends at the club. Lord Chiltern; I thought you were at daggers drawn with Chiltern." "They say he is going to be reconciled to his father, Gustavus,

and I do it for Lord Brentford's sake. And he won't come, so it does not signify. And I do believe that Violet has really refused him." "You are quite right about his not coming," said Lord Baldock, continuing to read the cards; "Chiltern certainly won't come. Count Sparrowsky;—I wonder what you know about Sparrowsky that you should ask him here." "He is asked about, Gustavus; he is indeed," pleaded Lady Baldock. "I believe that Sparrowsky is a penniless adventurer. Mr. Monk; well, he is a Cabinet Minister. Sir Gregory Greeswing; you mix your people nicely at any rate. Sir Gregory Greeswing is the most old-fashioned tory in England." "Of course we are not political, Gustavus." "Phineas Finn. They come alternately,—one and one."

"Mr. Finn is asked everywhere, Gustavus."

"I don't doubt it. They say he is a very good sort of fellow. They say also that Violet has found that out as well as other people."

"What do you mean, Gustavus?"

"I mean that everybody is saying that this Phineas Finn is going to set himself up in the world by marrying your niece. He is quite right to try it on, if he has a chance."

"I don't think he would be right at all," said Lady Baldock, with much energy. "I think he would be wrong,—shamefully wrong. They say he is the son of an Irish doctor, and that he has n't a shilling in the world."

"That is just why he would be right. What is such a man to do, but to marry money? He 's a deuced good-looking fellow, too, and will be sure to do it."

"He should work for his money in the City, then,

or somewhere there. But I don't believe it, Gustavus; I don't, indeed."

"Very well. I only tell you what I hear. The fact is that he and Chiltern have already quarrelled about her. If I were to tell you that they have been over to Holland together and fought a duel about her, you would n't believe that."

"Fought a duel about Violet! People don't fight duels now, and I should not believe it."

"Very well. Then send your card to Mr. Finn." And, so saying, Lord Baldock left the room.

Lady Baldock sat in silence for some time toasting her toes at the fire, and Augusta Boreham sat by, waiting for orders. She felt pretty nearly sure that new orders would be given if she did not herself interfere. "You had better put by that card for the present, my dear," said Lady Baldock at last. "I will make inquiries. I don't believe a word of what Gustavus has said. I don't think that even Violet is such a fool as that. But if rash and ill-natured people have spoken of it, it may be as well to be careful."

"It is always well to be careful;—is it not, mamma?"

"Not but what I think it very improper that these things should be said about a young woman; and as for the story of the duel, I don't believe a word of it. It is absurd. I dare say that Gustavus invented it at the moment, just to amuse himself."

The card of course was not sent, and Lady Baldock at any rate put so much faith in her son's story as to make her feel it to be her duty to interrogate her niece on the subject. Lady Baldock at this period of her life was certainly not free from fear of Violet Effingham. In the numerous encounters which took place between

them, the aunt seldom gained that amount of victory which would have completely satisfied her spirit. She longed to be dominant over her niece as she was dominant over her daughter; and when she found that she missed such supremacy, she longed to tell Violet to depart from out her borders, and be no longer niece of hers. But had she ever done so, Violet would have gone at the instant, and then terrible things would have followed. There is a satisfaction in turning out-of-doors a nephew or niece who is pecuniarily dependent, but when the youthful relative is richly endowed, the satisfaction is much diminished. It is the duty of a guardian, no doubt, to look after the ward; but if this cannot be done, the ward's money should at least be held with as close a fist as possible. But Lady Baldock, though she knew that she would be sorely wounded, poked about on her old body with the sharp lances of disobedience, and struck with the cruel swords of satire, if she took upon herself to scold or even to question Violet, nevertheless would not abandon the pleasure of lecturing and teaching. "It is my duty," she would say to herself, "and though it be taken in a bad spirit, I will always perform my duty." So she performed her duty, and asked Violet Effingham some few questions respecting Phineas Finn. "My dear," she said, "do you remember meeting a Mr. Finn at Saulsby?"

"A Mr. Finn, aunt! Why, he is a particular friend of mine. Of course I do, and he was at Saulsby. I have met him there more than once. Don't you remember that we were riding about together?"

"I remember that he was there, certainly; but I did not know that he was a special——friend."

"Most especial, aunt. A 1, I may say;—among young men, I mean."

Lady Baldock was certainly the most indiscreet of old women in such a matter as this, and Violet the most provoking of young ladies. Lady Baldock, believing that there was something to fear,—as, indeed, there was, much to fear,—should have been content to destroy the card, and to keep the young lady away from the young gentleman, if such keeping away was possible to her. But Miss Effingham was certainly very wrong to speak of any young man as being A 1. Fond as I am of Miss Effingham, I cannot justify her, and must acknowledge that she used the most offensive phrase she could find, on purpose to annoy her aunt.

"Violet," said Lady Baldock, bridling up, "I never heard such a word before from the lips of a young lady."

"Not as A 1? I thought it simply meant very good."

"A 1 is a nobleman," said Lady Baldock.

"No, aunt;—A 1 is a ship,—a ship that is very good," said Violet.

"And do you mean to say that Mr. Finn is,—is,—is,—very good?"

"Yes, indeed. You ask Lord Brentford, and Mr. Kennedy. You know he saved poor Mr. Kennedy from being throttled in the streets."

"That has nothing to do with it. A policeman might have done that."

"Then he would have been A 1 of policemen,—though A 1 does not mean a policeman."

"He would have done his duty, and so perhaps did Mr. Finn."

"Of course he did, aunt. It could n't have been his duty to stand by and see Mr. Kennedy throttled.

And he nearly killed one of the men, and took the other prisoner with his own hands. And he made a beautiful speech the other day. I read every word of it. I am so glad he 's a liberal. I do like young men to be liberals." Now Lord Baldock was a tory, as had been all the Lord Baldocks,—since the first who had been bought over from the whigs in the time of George III. at the cost of a barony.

"You have nothing to do with politics, Violet."

"Why should n't I have something to do with politics, aunt?"

"And I must tell you that your name is being very unpleasantly mentioned in connection with that of this young man because of your indiscretion."

"What indiscretion?" Violet, as she made her demand for a more direct accusation, stood quite upright before her aunt, looking the old woman full in the face, —almost with her arms akimbo.

"Calling him A 1, Violet."

"People have been talking about me and Mr. Finn, because I just now, at this very moment, called him A 1 to you! If you want to scold me about anything, aunt, do find out something less ridiculous than that."

"It was most improper language,—and if you used it to me, I am sure you would to others."

"To what others?"

"To Mr. Finn,—and those sort of people."

"Call Mr. Finn A 1 to his face! Well,—upon my honour I don't know why I should not. Lord Chiltern says he rides beautifully, and if we were talking about riding I might do so."

"You have no business to talk to Lord Chiltern about Mr. Finn at all."

"Have I not? I thought that perhaps the one sin might palliate the other. You know, aunt, no young lady, let her be ever so ill-disposed, can marry two objectionable young men,—at the same time."

"I said nothing about your marrying Mr. Finn."

"Then, aunt, what did you mean?"

"I meant that you should not allow yourself to be talked of with an adventurer, a young man without a shilling, a person who has come from nobody knows where in the bogs of Ireland."

"But you used to ask him here."

"Yes,—as long as he knew his place. But I shall not do so again. And I must beg you to be circumspect."

"My dear aunt, we may as well understand each other. I will not be circumspect, as you call it. And if Mr. Finn asked me to marry him to-morrow, and if I liked him well enough, I would take him,—even though he had been dug right out of a bog. Not only because I liked him,—mind! If I were unfortunate enough to like a man who was nothing, I would refuse him in spite of my liking,—because he was nothing. But this young man is not nothing. Mr. Finn is a fine fellow, and if there were no other reason to prevent my marrying him than his being the son of a doctor, and coming out of the bogs, that would not do so. Now I have made a clean breast to you as regards Mr. Finn; and if you do not like what I 've said, aunt, you must acknowledge that you have brought it on yourself."

Lady Baldock was left for a time speechless. But no card was sent to Phineas Finn.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROMOTION.

PHINEAS got no card from Lady Baldock, but one morning he received a note from Lord Brentford which was of more importance to him than any card could have been. At this time, bit by bit, the Reform Bill of the day had nearly made its way through the Committee, but had been so mutilated as to be almost impossible of recognition by its progenitors. And there was still a clause or two as to the rearrangement of seats, respecting which it was known that there would be a combat,—probably combats,—carried on after the internecine fashion. There was a certain clipping of counties to be done, as to which it was said that Mr. Daubeny had declared that he would not yield till he was made to do so by the brute force of majorities;—and there was another clause for the drafting of certain superfluous members from little boroughs, and bestowing them on populous towns at which they were much wanted, respecting which Mr. Turnbull had proclaimed that the clause as it now stood was a fainéant clause, capable of doing, and intended to do, no good in the proper direction; a clause put into the bill to gull ignorant folk who had not eyes enough to recognise the fact that it was fainéant; a make-believe clause,—so said Mr. Turnbull,—to be detested on that account by every true reformer worse than the old Philistine bonds and tory figments of representation, as to which

there was at least no hypocritical pretence of popular fitness. Mr. Turnbull had been very loud and very angry,—had talked much of demonstrations among the people, and had almost threatened the House. The House in its present mood did not fear any demonstrations,—but it did fear that Mr. Turnbull might help Mr. Daubeny, and that Mr. Daubeny might help Mr. Turnbull. It was now May,—the middle of May,—and Ministers, who had been at work on their Reform Bill ever since the beginning of the session, were becoming weary of it. And then, should these odious clauses escape the threatened Turnbull-Daubeny alliance,—then there was the House of Lords! "What a pity we can't pass our bills at the Treasury, and have done with them!" said Laurence Fitzgibbon. "Yes, indeed," replied Mr. Rattler. "For myself, I was never so tired of a session in my life. I would n't go through it again to be made,—no, not to be made Chancellor of the Exchequer."

Lord Brentford's note to Phineas Finn was as follows:—

"House of Lords, 16th May, 186—.

"My dear Mr. Finn,—You are no doubt aware that Lord Bosanquet's death has taken Mr. Mottram into the Upper House, and that as he was Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and as the Under-Secretary must be in the Lower House, the vacancy must be filled up." The heart of Phineas Finn at this moment was almost in his mouth. Not only to be selected for political employment, but to be selected at once for an office so singularly desirable! Under-Secretaries, he fancied, were paid two thousand a year. What would

Mr. Low say now? But his great triumph soon received a check. "Mr. Mildmay has spoken to me on the subject," continued the letter, "and informs me that he has offered the place at the Colonies to his old supporter, Mr. Laurence Fitzgibbon." Laurence Fitzgibbon! "I am inclined to think that he could not have done better, as Mr. Fitzgibbon has shown great zeal for his party. This will vacate the Irish seat at the Treasury Board, and I am commissioned by Mr. Mildmay to offer it to you. Perhaps you will do me the pleasure of calling on me to-morrow between the hours of eleven and twelve.

"Yours very sincerely,

"BRENTFORD."

Phineas was himself surprised to find that his first feeling on reading this letter was one of dissatisfaction. Here were his golden hopes about to be realised,—hopes as to the realisation of which he had been quite despondent twelve months ago,—and yet he was uncomfortable because he was to be postponed to Laurence Fitzgibbon. Had the new Under-Secretary been a man whom he had not known, whom he had not learned to look down upon as inferior to himself, he would not have minded it,—would have been full of joy at the promotion proposed for himself. But Laurence Fitzgibbon was such a poor creature, that the idea of filling a place from which Laurence had risen was distasteful to him. "It seems to be all a matter of favour and convenience," he said to himself, "without any reference to the service." His triumph would have been so complete had Mr. Mildmay allowed him to go into the higher place at one leap. Other

men who had made themselves useful had done so. In the first hour after receiving Lord Brentford's letter, the idea of becoming a Lord of the Treasury was almost displeasing to him. He had an idea that junior lordships of the Treasury were generally bestowed on young members whom it was convenient to secure, but who were not good at doing anything. There was a moment in which he thought that he would refuse to be made a junior lord.

But during the night cooler reflections told him that he had been very wrong. He had taken up politics with the express desire of getting his foot upon a rung of the ladder of promotion, and now, in this third session, he was about to be successful. Even as a junior lord he would have a thousand a year; and how long might he have sat in chambers, and have wandered about Lincoln's Inn, and have loitered in the courts striving to look as though he had business, before he would have earned a thousand a year! Even as a junior lord he could make himself useful, and when once he should be known to be a good working man, promotion would come to him. No ladder can be mounted without labour; but this ladder was now open above his head, and he already had his foot upon it.

At half-past eleven he was with Lord Brentford, who received him with the blandest smile and a pressure of the hand which was quite cordial. "My dear Finn," he said, "this gives me the most sincere pleasure,—the greatest pleasure in the world. Our connection together at Loughton of course makes it doubly agreeable to me."

"I cannot be too grateful to you, Lord Brentford."

"No, no; no, no. It is all your own doing. When

Mr. Mildmay asked me whether I did not think you the most promising of the young members on our side in your House, I certainly did say that I quite concurred. But I should be taking too much on myself, I should be acting dishonestly, if I were to allow you to imagine that it was my proposition. Had he asked me to recommend, I should have named you; that I say frankly. But he did not. He did not. Mr. Mildmay named you himself. 'Do you think,' he said, 'that your friend Finn would join us at the Treasury?' I told him that I did think so. 'And do you not think,' said he, 'that it would be a useful appointment?' Then I ventured to say that I had no doubt whatever on that point;—that I knew you well enough to feel confident that you would lend a strength to the liberal Government. Then there were a few words said about your seat, and I was commissioned to write to you. That was all."

Phineas was grateful, but not too grateful, and bore himself very well in the interview. He explained to Lord Brentford that of course it was his object to serve the country,—and to be paid for his services,—and that he considered himself to be very fortunate to be selected so early in his career for parliamentary place. He would endeavour to do his duty, and could safely say of himself that he did not wish to eat the bread of idleness. As he made this assertion, he thought of Laurence Fitzgibbon. Laurence Fitzgibbon had eaten the bread of idleness, and yet he was promoted. But Phineas said nothing to Lord Brentford about his idle friend. When he had made his little speech he asked a question about the borough.

"I have already ventured to write a letter to my agent at Loughton, telling him that you have accepted

office, and that you will be shortly there again. He will see Shortribs and arrange it. But if I were you I should write to Shortribs and to Grating,—after I had seen Mr. Mildmay. Of course you will not mention my name." And the Earl looked very grave as he uttered this caution.

"Of course I will not," said Phineas.

"I do not think you 'll find any difficulty about the seat," said the peer. "There never has been any difficulty at Loughton yet. I must say that for them. And if we can scrape through with Clause 72 we shall be all right;—shall we not?" This was the clause as to which so violent an opposition was expected from Mr. Turnbull,—a clause as to which Phineas himself had felt that he would hardly know how to support the Government, in the event of the Committee being pressed to a division upon it. Could he, an ardent reformer, a reformer at heart,—could he say that such a borough as Loughton should be spared;—that the arrangement by which Shortribs and Grating had sent him to Parliament, in obedience to Lord Brentford's orders, was in due accord with the theory of a representative legislature? In what respect had Gatton and old Sarum been worse than Loughton? Was he not himself false to his principle in sitting for such a borough as Loughton? He had spoken to Mr. Monk, and Mr. Monk had told him that Rome was not built in a day,—and had told him also that good things were most valued and were more valuable when they came by instalments. But then Mr. Monk himself enjoyed the satisfaction of sitting for a popular constituency. He was not personally pricked in the conscience by his own parliamentary position. Now, however,—now

that Phineas had consented to join the Government, any such considerations as these must be laid aside. He could no longer be a free agent, or even a free thinker. He had been quite aware of this, and had taught himself to understand that members of Parliament in the direct service of the Government were absolved from the necessity of free-thinking. Individual free-thinking was incompatible with the position of a member of the Government, and unless such abnegation were practised, no government would be possible. It was of course a man's duty to bind himself together with no other men but those with whom, on matters of general policy, he could agree heartily;—but having found that he could so agree, he knew that it would be his duty as a subaltern to vote as he was directed. It would trouble his conscience less to sit for Loughton and vote for an objectionable clause as a member of the Government, than it would have done to give such a vote as an independent member. In so resolving, he thought that he was simply acting in accordance with the acknowledged rules of parliamentary government. And therefore, when Lord Brentford spoke of Clause 72, he could answer pleasantly, "I think we shall carry it; and, you see, in getting it through Committee, if we can carry it by one, that is as good as a hundred. That 's the comfort of close-fighting in Committee. In the open House we are almost as much beaten by a narrow majority as by a vote against us."

"Just so; just so," said Lord Brentford, delighted to see that his young pupil,—as he regarded him,—understood so well the system of parliamentary management. "By-the-bye, Finn, have you seen Chiltern lately?"

"Not quite lately," said Phineas, blushing up to his eyes.

"Or heard from him?"

"No;—nor heard from him. When last I heard of him he was in Brussels."

"Ah,—yes; he is somewhere on the Rhine now. I thought that as you were so intimate, perhaps you corresponded with him. Have you heard that we have arranged about Lady Laura's money?"

"I have heard. Lady Laura has told me."

"I wish he would return," said Lord Brentford sadly, —almost solemnly. "As that great difficulty is over, I would receive him willingly, and make my house pleasant to him, if I can do so. I am most anxious that he should settle, and marry. Could you not write to him?" Phineas, not daring to tell Lord Brentford that he had quarrelled with Lord Chiltern,—feeling that if he did so everything would go wrong,—said that he would write to Lord Chiltern.

As he went away he felt that he was bound to get an answer from Violet Effingham. If it should be necessary, he was willing to break with Lord Brentford on that matter,—even though such breaking should lose him his borough and his place;—but not on any other matter.

CHAPTER XIX.

PHINEAS AND HIS FRIENDS.

Our hero's friends were, I think, almost more elated by our hero's promotion than was our hero himself. He never told himself that it was a great thing to be a junior lord of the Treasury, though he acknowledged to himself that to have made a successful beginning was a very great thing. But his friends were loud in their congratulations,—or condolements as the case might be.

He had his interview with Mr. Mildmay, and, after that, one of his first steps was to inform Mrs. Bunce that he must change his lodgings. "The truth is, Mrs. Bunce, not that I want anything better; but that a better position will be advantageous to me, and that I can afford to pay for it." Mrs. Bunce acknowledged the truth of the argument, with her apron up to her eyes. "I 've got to be so fond of looking after you, Mr. Finn! I have indeed," said Mrs. Bunce. "It is not just what you pays like, because another party will pay as much. But we 've got so used to you, Mr. Finn,—have n't we?" Mrs. Bunce was probably not aware herself that the comeliness of her lodger had pleased her feminine eye, and touched her feminine heart. Had anybody said that Mrs. Bunce was in love with Phineas, the scandal would have been monstrous. And yet it was so,—after a fashion. And Bunce knew it,—after his fashion. "Don't be such an old fool,"

he said, "crying after him because he 's six foot high." "I ain't crying after him because he 's six foot high," whined the poor woman;—"but one does like old faces better than new, and a gentleman about one 's place is pleasant." "Gentleman be d——d," said Bunce. But his anger was excited, not by his wife's love for Phineas, but by the use of an objectionable word.

Bunce himself had been on very friendly terms with Phineas, and they two had had many discussions on matters of politics, Bunce taking up the cudgels always for Mr. Turnbull, and generally slipping away gradually into some account of his own martyrdom. For he had been a martyr, having failed in obtaining any redress against the policeman who had imprisoned him so wrongfully. The People's Banner had fought for him manfully, and therefore there was a little disagreement between him and Phineas on the subject of that great organ of public opinion. And as Mr. Bunce thought that his lodger was very wrong to sit for Lord Brentford's borough, subjects were sometimes touched which were a little galling to Phineas.

Touching this promotion, Bunce had nothing but condolement to offer to the new junior lord. "Oh yes," said he, in answer to an argument from Phineas, "I suppose there must be lords, as you call 'em; though for the matter of that I can't see as they is of any mortal use."

"Would n't you have the Government carried on?"

"Government! Well; I suppose there must be government. But the less of it the better. I 'm not against government;—nor yet against laws, Mr. Finn; though the less of them, too, the better. But what does these lords do in the Government? Lords in-

deed! I 'll tell you what they do, Mr. Finn. They wotes; that 's what they do! They wotes hard; black or white, white or black. Ain't that true? When you 're a 'lord,' will you be able to wote against Mr. Mildmay to save your very soul?"

"If it comes to be a question of soul-saving, Mr. Bunce, I shan't save my place at the expense of my conscience."

"Not if you knows it, you mean. But the worst of it is that a man gets so thick into the mud that he don't know whether he 's dirty or clean. You 'll have to wote as you 're told, and of course you 'll think it 's right enough. Ain't you been among Parliament gents long enough to know that that 's the way it goes?"

"You think no honest man can be a member of the Government?"

"I don't say that, but I think honesty 's a deal easier away from 'em. The fact is, Mr. Finn, it 's all wrong with us yet, and will be till we get it nigher to the great American model. If a poor man gets into Parliament,—you 'll excuse me, Mr. Finn, but I calls you a poor man."

"Certainly,—as a member of Parliament I am a very poor man."

"Just so,—and therefore whot do you do? You goes and lays yourself out for government! I 'm not saying as how you 're anyways wrong. A man has to live. You has winning ways, and a good physognomy of your own, and are as big as a life-guardsman." Phineas as he heard this doubtful praise laughed and blushed. "Very well, you makes your way with the big-wigs, lords and earls and them like, and you gets returned for a rotten borough;—you 'll excuse me, but

that 's about it, ain't it?—and then you goes in for government! A man may have a mission to govern, such as Washington and Cromwell and the like o' them. But when I hears of Mr. Fitzgibbon a-governing, why then I says,—d——n it all."

"There must be good and bad, you know."

"We 've got to change a deal yet, Mr. Finn, and we 'll do it. When a young man as has liberal feelings gets into Parliament, he should n't be snapped up and brought into the governing business just because he 's poor and wants a salary. They don't do it that way in the States; and they won't do it that way here long. It 's the system as I hates, and not you, Mr. Finn. Well, good-bye, sir. I hope you 'll like the governing business, and find it suits your health."

These condolements from Mr. Bunce were not pleasant, but they set him thinking. He felt assured that Bunce and Quintus Slide and Mr. Turnbull were wrong. Bunce was ignorant. Quintus Slide was dishonest. Turnbull was greedy of popularity. For himself, he thought that as a young man he was fairly well informed. He knew that he meant to be true in his vocation. And he was quite sure that the object nearest to his heart in politics was not self-aggrandisement, but the welfare of the people in general. And yet he could not but agree with Bunce that there was something wrong. When such men as Laurence Fitzgibbon were called upon to act as governors, was it not to be expected that the ignorant but still intelligent Bunces of the population should——"d——n it all?"

On the evening of that day he went up to Mrs. Low's, very sure that he should receive some encouragement from her and from her husband. She had

been angry with him because he had put himself into a position in which money must be spent and none could be made. The Lows, especially Mrs. Low, had refused to believe that any success was within his reach. Now that he had succeeded, now that he was in receipt of a salary on which he could live and save money, he would be sure of sympathy from his old friends the Lows!

But Mrs. Low was as severe upon him as Mr. Bunce had been, and even from Mr. Low he could extract no real comfort. "Of course I congratulate you," said Mr. Low coldly.

"And you, Mrs. Low?"

"Well, you know, Mr. Finn, I think you have begun at the wrong end. I thought so before, and I think so still. I suppose I ought not to say so to a Lord of the Treasury, but if you ask me, what can I do?"

"Speak the truth out, of course."

"Exactly. That 's what I must do. Well, the truth is, Mr. Finn, that I do not think it is a very good opening for a young man to be made what they call a Lord of the Treasury,—unless he has got a private fortune, you know, to support that kind of life."

"You see, Phineas, a ministry is such an uncertain thing," said Mr. Low.

"Of course it 's uncertain;—but as I did go into the House, it 's something to have succeeded."

"If you call that success," said Mrs. Low.

"You did intend to go on with your profession," said Mr. Low. He could not tell them that he had changed his mind, and that he meant to marry Violet Effingham, who would much prefer a parliamentary life for her husband to that of a working barrister.

"I suppose that is all given up now," continued Mr. Low.

"Just for the present," said Phineas.

"Yes; — and forever, I fear," said Mrs. Low. "You 'll never go back to real work after frittering away your time as a Lord of the Treasury. What sort of work must it be when just anybody can do it that it suits them to lay hold of? But of course a thousand a year is something, though a man may have it for only six months."

It came out in the course of the evening that Mr. Low was going to stand for the borough vacated by Mr. Mottram, at which it was considered that the conservatives might possibly prevail. "You see, after all, Phineas," said Mr. Low, "that I am following your steps."

"Ah; you are going into the House in the course of your profession."

"Just so," said Mrs. Low.

"And are taking the first step towards being a tory Attorney-General."

"That 's as may be," said Mr. Low. "But it 's the kind of thing a man does after twenty years of hard work. For myself, I really don't care much whether I succeed or fail. I should like to live to be a Vice-Chancellor. I don't mind saying as much as that to you. But I 'm not at all sure that Parliament is the best way to the Equity Bench."

"But it is a grand thing to get into Parliament when you do it by means of your profession," said Mrs. Low.

Soon after that Phineas took his departure from the house, feeling sore and unhappy. But on the next morning he was received in Grosvenor Place with an

amount of triumph which went far to compensate him. Lady Laura had written to him to call there, and on his arrival he found both Violet Effingham and Madame Max Goesler with his friend. When Phineas entered the room his first feeling was one of intense joy at seeing that Violet Effingham was present there. Then there was one of surprise that Madame Max Goesler should make one of the little party. Lady Laura had told him at Mr. Palliser's dinner-party that they, in Portman Square, had not as yet advanced far enough to receive Madame Max Goesler,—and yet here was the lady in Mr. Kennedy's drawing-room. Now Phineas would have thought it more likely that he should find her in Portman Square than in Grosvenor Place. The truth was that Madame Goesler had been brought by Miss Effingham,—with the consent, indeed, of Lady Laura, but with a consent given with much of hesitation. "What are you afraid of?" Violet had asked.

"I am afraid of nothing," Lady Laura had answered; "but one has to choose one's acquaintance in accordance with rules which one does n't lay down very strictly."

"She is a clever woman," said Violet, "and everybody likes her; but if you think Mr. Kennedy would object, of course you are right." Then Lady Laura had consented, telling herself that it was not necessary that she should ask her husband's approval as to every new acquaintance she might form. At the same time Violet had been told that Phineas would be there, and so the party had been made up.

"'See the conquering hero comes,'" said Violet in her cheeriest voice.

"I am so glad that Mr. Finn has been made a lord of something," said Madame Max Goesler. "I had the pleasure of a long political discussion with him the other night, and I quite approve of him."

"We are so much gratified, Mr. Finn," said Lady Laura. "Mr. Kennedy says that it is the best appointment they could have made, and papa is quite proud about it."

"You are Lord Brentford's member; are you not?" asked Madame Max Goesler. This was a question which Phineas did not quite like, and which he was obliged to excuse by remembering that the questioner had lived so long out of England as to be probably ignorant of the myths, and theories, and system, and working of the British Constitution. Violet Effingham, little as she knew of politics, would never have asked a question so imprudent.

But the question was turned off, and Phineas, with an easy grace, submitted himself to be petted, and congratulated, and purred over, and almost caressed by the three ladies. Their good-natured enthusiasm was at any rate better than the satire of Bunce, or the wisdom of Mrs. Low. Lady Laura had no misgivings as to Phineas being fit for governing, and Violet Effingham said nothing as to the short-lived tenure of Ministers. Madame Max Goesler, though she had asked an indiscreet question, thoroughly appreciated the advantage of Government pay, and the prestige of Government power. "You are a lord now," she said, speaking, as was customary with her, with the slightest possible foreign accent, "and you will be a president soon, and then perhaps a secretary. The order of promotion seems odd, but I am told it is very pleasant."

"It is pleasant to succeed, of course," said Phineas, "let the success be ever so little."

"We knew you would succeed," said Lady Laura. "We were quite sure of it. Were we not, Violet?"

"You always said so, my dear. For myself I do not venture to have an opinion on such matters. Will you always have to go to that big building in the corner, Mr. Finn, and stay there from ten till four? Won't that be a bore?"

"We have a half-holiday on Saturday, you know," said Phineas.

"And do the Lords of the Treasury have to take care of the money?" asked Madame Max Goesler.

"Only their own; and they generally fail in doing that," said Phineas.

He sat there for a considerable time, wondering whether Mr. Kennedy would come in, and wondering also as to what Mr. Kennedy would say to Madame Max Goesler when he did come in. He knew that it was useless for him to expect any opportunity, then or there, of being alone for a moment with Violet Effingham. His only chance in that direction would be in some crowded room, at some ball at which he might ask her to dance with him; but it seemed that fate was very unkind to him, and that no such chance came in his way. Mr. Kennedy did not appear, and Madame Max Goesler with Violet went away, leaving Phineas still sitting with Lady Laura. Each of them said a kind word to him as they went. "I don't know whether I may dare to expect that a Lord of the Treasury will come and see me?" said Madame Max Goesler. Then Phineas made a second promise that he would call in Park Lane. Violet blushed as she

remembered that she could not ask him to call at Lady Baldock's. "Good-bye, Mr. Finn," she said, giving him her hand. "I 'm so very glad that they have chosen you; and I do hope that, as Madame Max says, they 'll make you a secretary and a president, and everything else very quickly,—till it will come to your turn to be making other people." "He is very nice," said Madame Goesler to Violet as she took her place in the carriage. "He bears being petted and spoilt without being either awkward or conceited." "On the whole, he is rather nice," said Violet; "only he has not got a shilling in the world, and has to make himself before he will be anybody." "He must marry money, of course," said Madame Max Goesler.

"I hope you are contented?" said Lady Laura, rising from her chair and coming opposite to him as soon as they were alone.

"Of course I am contented."

"I was not,—when I first heard of it. Why did they promote that empty-headed countryman of yours to a place for which he was quite unfit? I was not contented. But then I am more ambitious for you than you are for yourself." He sat without answering her for a while, and she stood waiting for his reply. "Have you nothing to say to me?" she asked.

"I do not know what to say. When I think of it all, I am lost in amazement. You tell me that you are not contented;—that you are ambitious for me. Why is it that you should feel any interest in the matter?"

"Is it not reasonable that we should be interested for our friends?"

"But when you and I last parted here in this room you were hardly my friend."

"Was I not? You wrong me there;—very deeply."

"I told you what was my ambition, and you resented it," said Phineas.

"I think I said that I could not help you, and I think I said also that I thought you would fail. I do not know that I showed much resentment. You see, I told her that you were here, that she might come and meet you. You know that I wished my brother should succeed. I wished it before I ever knew you. You cannot expect that I should change my wishes."

"But if he cannot succeed," pleaded Phineas.

"Who is to say that? Has a woman never been won by devotion and perseverance? Besides, how can I wish to see you go on with a suit which must sever you from my father, and injure your political prospects;—perhaps fatally injure them? It seems to me now that my father is almost the only man in London who has not heard of this duel."

"Of course he will hear of it. I have half made up my mind to tell him myself."

"Do not do that, Mr. Finn. There can be no reason for it. But I did not ask you to come here to-day to talk to you about Oswald or Violet. I have given you my advice about that, and I can do no more."

"Lady Laura, I cannot take it. It is out of my power to take it."

"Very well. The matter shall be what you members of Parliament call an open question between us. When papa asked you to accept this place at the Treasury, did it ever occur to you to refuse it?"

"It did;—for half an hour or so."

"I hoped you would,—and yet I knew that I was wrong. I thought that you should count yourself to

be worth more than that, and that you should, as it were, assert yourself. But then it is so difficult to draw the line between proper self-assertion and proper self-denial;—to know how high to go up the table, and how low to go down. I do not doubt that you have been right,—only make them understand that you are not as other junior lords;—that you have been willing to be a junior lord, or anything else for a purpose; but that the purpose is something higher than that of fetching and carrying in Parliament for Mr. Mildmay and Mr. Palliser."

"I hope in time to get beyond fetching and carrying," said Phineas.

"Of course you will; and knowing that, I am glad that you are in office. I suppose there will be no difficulty about Loughton."

Then Phineas laughed. "I hear," said he, "that Mr. Quintus Slide, of the People's Banner, has already gone down to canvass the electors."

"Mr. Quintus Slide! To canvass the electors of Loughton!" and Lady Laura drew herself up and spoke of this unseemly intrusion on her father's borough, as though the vulgar man who had been named had forced his way into the very drawing-room in Portman Square. At that moment Mr. Kennedy came in. "Do you hear what Mr. Finn tells me?" she said. "He has heard that Mr. Quintus Slide has gone down to Loughton to stand against him."

"And why not?" said Mr. Kennedy.

"My dear!" ejaculated Lady Laura.

"Mr. Quintus Slide will no doubt lose his time and his money;—but he will gain the prestige of having stood for a borough, which will be something

for him on the staff of the People's Banner," said Mr. Kennedy.

"He will get that horrid man Vellum to propose him," said Lady Laura.

"Very likely," said Mr. Kennedy. "And the less any of us say about it the better. Finn, my dear fellow, I congratulate you heartily. Nothing for a long time has given me greater pleasure than hearing of your appointment. It is equally honourable to yourself and to Mr. Mildmay. It is a great step to have gained so early."

Phineas, as he thanked his friend, could not help asking himself what his friend had done to be made a Cabinet Minister. Little as he, Phineas, himself had done in the House in his two sessions and a half, Mr. Kennedy had hardly done more in his fifteen or twenty. But then Mr. Kennedy was possessed of almost miraculous wealth, and owned half a county, whereas he, Phineas, owned almost nothing at all. Of course no Prime Minister would offer a junior lordship at the Treasury to a man with £30,000 a year. Soon after this Phineas took his leave. "I think he will do well," said Mr. Kennedy to his wife.

"I am sure he will do well," replied Lady Laura, almost scornfully.

"He is not quite such a black swan with me as he is with you; but still I think he will succeed, if he takes care of himself. It is astonishing how that absurd story of his duel with Chiltern has got about."

"It is impossible to prevent people talking," said Lady Laura.

"I suppose there was some quarrel, though neither of them will tell you. They say it was about Miss

Effingham. I should hardly think that Finn could have any hopes in that direction."

"Why should he not have hopes?"

"Because he has neither position, nor money, nor birth," said Mr. Kennedy.

"He is a gentleman," said Lady Laura; "and I think he has position. I do not see why he should not ask any girl to marry him."

"There is no understanding you, Laura," said Mr. Kennedy angrily. "I thought you had quite other hopes about Miss Effingham."

"So I have; but that has nothing to do with it. You spoke of Mr. Finn as though he would be guilty of some crime were he to ask Violet Effingham to be his wife. In that I disagree with you. Mr. Finn is——"

"You will make me sick of the name of Mr. Finn."

"I am sorry that I offend you by my gratitude to a man who saved your life." Mr. Kennedy shook his head. He knew that the argument used against him was false, but he did not know how to show that he knew that it was false. "Perhaps I had better not mention his name any more," continued Lady Laura.

"Nonsense!"

"I quite agree with you that it is nonsense, Robert."

"All I mean to say is, that if you go on as you do, you will turn his head and spoil him. Do you think I do not know what is going on among you?"

"And what is going on among us,—as you call it?"

"You are taking this young man up and putting him on a pedestal and worshipping him, just because he is well-looking, and rather clever and decently behaved. It 's always the way with women who have

nothing to do, and who cannot be made to understand that they should have duties. They cannot live without some kind of idolatry."

"Have I neglected my duty to you, Robert?"

"Yes,—you know you have;—in going to those receptions at your father's house on Sundays."

"What has that to do with Mr. Finn?"

"Psha!"

"I begin to think I had better tell Mr. Finn not to come here any more, since his presence is disagreeable to you. All the world knows how great is the service he did you, and it will seem to be very ridiculous. People will say all manner of things; but anything will be better than that you should go on as you have done,—accusing your wife of idolatry towards——a young man, because——he is——well-looking."

"I never said anything of the kind."

"You did, Robert."

"I did not. I did not speak more of you than of a lot of others."

"You accused me personally, saying that because of my idolatry I had neglected my duty; but really you made such a jumble of it all, with papa's visitors, and Sunday afternoons, that I cannot follow what was in your mind."

Then Mr. Kennedy stood for a while, collecting his thoughts, so that he might unravel the jumble, if that were possible to him; but finding that it was not possible, he left the room, and closed the door behind him.

Then Lady Laura was left alone to consider the nature of the accusation which her husband had brought against her; or the nature rather of the accu-

sation which she had chosen to assert that her husband had implied. For in her heart she knew that he had made no such accusation, and had intended to make none such. The idolatry of which he had spoken was the idolatry which a woman might show to her cat, her dog, her picture, her china, her furniture, her carriage and horses, or her pet maid-servant. Such was the idolatry of which Mr. Kennedy had spoken;—but was there no other worship in her heart, worse, more pernicious than that, in reference to this young man?

She had schooled herself about him very severely, and had come to various resolutions. She had found out and confessed to herself that she did not, and could not, love her husband. She had found out and confessed to herself that she did love, and could not help loving, Phineas Finn. Then she had resolved to banish him from her presence, and had gone the length of telling him so. After that she had perceived that she had been wrong, and had determined to meet him as she met other men,—and to conquer her love. Then, when this could not be done, when something almost like idolatry grew upon her, she determined that it should be the idolatry of friendship, that she would not sin even in thought, that there should be nothing in her heart of which she need be ashamed; —but that the one great object and purport of her life should be the promotion of this friend's welfare. She had just begun to love after this fashion, had taught herself to believe that she might combine something of the pleasure of idolatry towards her friend with a full complement of duty towards her husband, when Phineas came to her with his tale of love for Violet Effingham. The lesson which she got then was a very rough one,—

so hard that at first she could not bear it. Her anger at his love for her brother's wished-for bride was lost in her dismay that Phineas should love any one after having once loved her. But by sheer force of mind she had conquered that dismay, that feeling of desolation at her heart, and had almost taught herself to hope that Phineas might succeed with Violet. He wished it,—and why should he not have what he wished,—he, whom she so fondly idolised? It was not his fault that he and she were not man and wife. She had chosen to arrange it otherwise, and was she not bound to assist him now in the present object of his reasonable wishes? She had got over in her heart that difficulty about her brother, but she could not quite conquer the other difficulty. She could not bring herself to plead his cause with Violet. She had not brought herself as yet to do it.

And now she was accused of idolatry for Phineas by her husband,—she with "a lot of others," in which lot Violet was of course included. Would it not be better that they two should be brought together? Would not her friend's husband still be her friend? Would she not then forget to love him? Would she not then be safer than she was now?

As she sat alone struggling with her difficulties, she had not as yet forgotten to love him,—nor was she as yet safe.

CHAPTER XX.

MISS EFFINGHAM'S FOUR LOVERS.

One morning early in June Lady Laura called at Lady Baldock's house and asked for Miss Effingham. The servant was showing her into the large drawing-room, when she again asked specially for Miss Effingham. "I think Miss Effingham is there," said the man, opening the door. Miss Effingham was not there. Lady Baldock was sitting all alone, and Lady Laura perceived that she had been caught in the net which she specially wished to avoid. Now Lady Baldock had not actually or openly quarrelled with Lady Laura Kennedy or with Lord Brentford, but she had conceived a strong idea that her niece Violet was countenanced in all improprieties by the Standish family generally, and that therefore the Standish family was to be regarded as a family of enemies. There was doubtless in her mind considerable confusion on the subject, for she did not know whether Lord Chiltern or Mr. Finn was the suitor whom she most feared, —and she was aware, after a sort of muddled fashion, that the claims of these two wicked young men were antagonistic to each other. But they were both regarded by her as emanations from the same source of iniquity, and, therefore, without going deeply into the machinations of Lady Laura,—without resolving whether Lady Laura was injuring her by pressing her brother as a suitor upon Miss Effingham, or by press-

ing a rival of her brother,—still she became aware that it was her duty to turn a cold shoulder on those two houses in Portman Square and Grosvenor Place. But her difficulties in doing this were very great, and it may be said that Lady Baldock was placed in an unjust and cruel position. Before the end of May she had proposed to leave London, and to take her daughter and Violet down to Baddingham,—or to Brighton, if they preferred it, or to Switzerland. "Brighton in June!" Violet had exclaimed. "Would not a month among the glaciers be delightful!" Miss Boreham had said. "Don't let me keep you in town, aunt," Violet replied; "but I do not think I shall go till other people go. I can have a room at Laura Kennedy's house." Then Lady Baldock, whose position was hard and cruel, resolved that she would stay in town. Here she had in her hands a ward over whom she had no positive power, and yet in respect to whom her duty was imperative! Her duty was imperative, and Lady Baldock was not the woman to neglect her duty;—and yet she knew that the doing of her duty would all be in vain. Violet would marry a shoe-black out of the streets if she were so minded. It was of no use that the poor lady had provided herself with two strings, two most excellent strings, to her bow,—two strings either one of which should have contented Miss Effingham. There was Lord Fawn, a young peer, not very rich indeed,—but still with means sufficient for a wife, a rising man, and in every way respectable, although a whig. And there was Mr. Appledom, one of the richest commoners in England, a fine conservative too, with a seat in the House, and everything appropriate. He was fifty, but looked hardly more than

thirty-five, and was,—so at least Lady Baldock frequently asserted,—violently in love with Violet Effingham. Why had not the law, or the executors, or the Lord Chancellor, or some power levied for the protection of the proprieties, made Violet absolutely subject to her guardian till she should be made subject to a husband?

"Yes, I think she is at home," said Lady Baldock, in answer to Lady Laura's inquiry for Violet. "At least, I hardly know. She seldom tells me what she means to do,—and sometimes she will walk out quite alone!" A most imprudent old woman was Lady Baldock, always opening her hand to her adversaries, unable to control herself in the scolding of people, either before their faces or behind their backs, even at moments in which such scolding was most injurious to her own cause. "However, we will see," she continued. Then the bell was rung, and in a few minutes Violet was in the room. In a few minutes more they were upstairs together in Violet's own room, in spite of the openly displayed wrath of Lady Baldock. "I almost wish she had never been born," said Lady Baldock to her daughter. "Oh, mamma, don't say that." "I certainly do wish that I had never seen her." "Indeed she has been a grievous trouble to you, mamma," said Miss Boreham sympathetically.

"Brighton! What nonsense!" said Lady Laura.

"Of course it 's nonsense. Fancy going to Brighton! And then they have proposed Switzerland. If you could only hear Augusta talking in rapture of a month among the glaciers! And I feel so ungrateful. I believe they would spend three months with me at any horrible place that I could suggest,—at Hong Kong if

I were to ask it,—so intent are they on taking me away from metropolitan danger."

"But you will not go?"

"No!—I won't go. I know I am very naughty; but I can't help feeling that I cannot be good without being a fool at the same time. I must either fight my aunt, or give way to her. If I were to yield, what a life I should have;—and I should despise myself after all."

"And what is the special danger to be feared now?"

"I don't know;—you, I fancy. I told her that if she went, I should go to you. I knew that would make her stay."

"I wish you would come to me," said Lady Laura.

"I should n't think of it really,—not for any length of time."

"Why not?"

"Because I should be in Mr. Kennedy's way."

"You would n't be in his way in the least. If you would only be down punctually for morning prayers, and go to church with him on Sunday afternoon, he would be delighted to have you."

"What did he say about Madame Max coming?"

"Not a word. I don't think he quite knew who she was then. I fancy he has inquired since, by something he said yesterday."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing that matters;—only a word. I have n't come here to talk about Madame Max Goesler,—nor yet about Mr. Kennedy."

"Whom have you come to talk about?" asked Violet, laughing a little, with something of increased colour in her cheeks, though she could not be said to blush.

"A lover of course," said Lady Laura.

"I wish you would leave me alone with my lovers. You are as bad or worse than my aunt. She, at any rate, varies her prescription. She has become sick of poor Lord Fawn because he 's a whig."

"And who is her favourite now?"

"Old Mr. Appledom,—who is really a most unexceptionable old party, and whom I like of all things. I really think I could consent to be Mrs. Appledom, to get rid of my troubles,—if he did not dye his whiskers and have his coats padded."

"He 'd give up those little things if you asked him."

"I should n't have the heart to do it. Besides, this is n't his time of the year for making proposals. His love fever, which is of a very low kind, and intermits annually, never comes on till the autumn. It is a rural malady, against which he is proof while among his clubs!"

"Well, Violet,—I am like your aunt."

"Like Lady Baldock?"

"In one respect. I, too, will vary my prescription."

"What do you mean, Laura?"

"Just this,—that if you like to marry Phineas Finn, I will say that you are right."

"Heaven and earth! And why am I to marry Phineas Finn?"

"Only for two reasons; because he loves you, and because——"

"No,—I deny it. I do not."

"I had come to fancy that you did."

"Keep your fancy more under control, then. But upon my word I can't understand this. He was your great friend."

"What has that to do with it?" demanded Lady Laura.

"And you have thrown over your brother, Laura?"

"You have thrown him over. Is he to go on forever asking and being refused?"

"I do not know why he should not," said Violet, "seeing how very little trouble it gives him. Half an hour once in six months does it all for him, allowing him time for coming and going in a cab."

"Violet, I do not understand you. Have you refused Oswald so often because he does not pass hours on his knees before you?"

"No, indeed! His nature would be altered very much for the worse before he could do that."

"Why do you throw it in his teeth, then, that he does not give you more of his time?"

"Why have you come to tell me to marry Mr. Phineas Finn? That is what I want to know. Mr. Phineas Finn, as far as I am aware, has not a shilling in the world,—except a month's salary now due to him from the Government. Mr. Phineas Finn I believe to be the son of a country doctor in Ireland,—with about seven sisters. Mr. Phineas Finn is a Roman Catholic. Mr. Phineas Finn is,—or was a short time ago,—in love with another lady; and Mr. Phineas Finn is not so much in love at this moment but what he is able to intrust his cause to an ambassador. None short of a royal suitor should ever do that with success."

"Has he never pleaded his cause to you himself?"

"My dear, I never tell gentlemen's secrets. It seems that if he has, his success was so trifling that he has thought he had better trust some one else for the future."

"He has not trusted me. He has not given me any commission."

"Then why have you come?"

"Because,—I hardly know how to tell his story. There have been things about Oswald which made it almost necessary that Mr. Finn should explain himself to me."

"I know it all;—about their fighting. Foolish young men! I am not a bit obliged to either of them,—not a bit. Only fancy, if my aunt knew it, what a life she would lead me! Gustavus knows all about it, and I feel that I am living at his mercy. Why were they so wrong-headed?"

"I cannot answer that,—though I know them well enough to be sure that Chiltern was the one in fault."

"It is so odd that you should have thrown your brother over."

"I have not thrown my brother over. Will you accept Oswald if he asks you again?"

"No," almost shouted Violet.

"Then I hope that Mr. Finn may succeed. I want him to succeed in everything. There;—you may know it all. He is my Phœbus Apollo."

"That is flattering to me,—looking at the position in which you desire to place your Phœbus at the present moment."

"Come, Violet, I am true to you, and let me have a little truth from you. This man loves you, and I think is worthy of you. He does not love me, but he is my friend. As his friend, and believing in his worth, I wish for his success beyond almost anything else in the world. Listen to me, Violet. I don't be-

lieve in those reasons which you gave me just now for not becoming this man's wife."

"Nor do I."

"I know you do not. Look at me. I, who have less of real heart than you, I who thought that I could trust myself to satisfy my mind and my ambition without caring for my heart, I have married for what you call position. My husband is very rich, and a Cabinet Minister, and will probably be a peer. And he was willing to marry me at a time when I had not a shilling of my own."

"He was very generous."

"He has asked for it since," said Lady Laura. "But never mind. I have not come to talk about myself;—otherwise than to bid you not to do what I have done. All that you have said about this man's want of money and of family is nothing."

"Nothing at all," said Violet. "Mere words,—fit only for such people as my aunt."

"Well then?"

"Well?"

"If you love him——!"

"Ah! but if I do not? You are very close in inquiring into my secrets. Tell me, Laura;—was not this young Crichton once a lover of your own?"

"Phsa! And do you think I cannot keep a gentleman's secret as well as you?"

"What is the good of any secret, Laura, when we have been already so open? He tried his 'prentice hand on you; and then he came to me. Let us watch him, and see who 'll be the third. I too like him well enough to hope that he 'll land himself safely at last."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MOUSETRAP.

PHINEAS had certainly no desire to make love by an ambassador,—at second-hand. He had given no commission to Lady Laura, and was, as the reader is aware, quite ignorant of what was being done and said on his behalf. He had asked no more from Lady Laura than an opportunity of speaking for himself, and that he had asked almost with a conviction that by so asking he would turn his friend into an enemy. He had read but little of the workings of Lady Laura's heart towards himself, and had no idea of the assistance she was anxious to give him. She had never told him that she was willing to sacrifice her brother on his behalf, and, of course, had not told him that she was willing also to sacrifice herself. Nor, when she wrote to him one June morning and told him that Violet would be found in Portman Square, alone, that afternoon,—naming an hour, and explaining that Miss Effingham would be there to meet herself and her father, but that at such an hour she would be certainly alone, —did he even then know how much she was prepared to do for him. The short note was signed "L.," and then there came a long postscript. "Ask for me," she said in a postscript. "I shall be there later, and I have told them to bid you wait. I can give you no hope of success, but if you choose to try,—you can do

so. If you do not come, I shall know that you have changed your mind. I shall not think the worse of you, and your secret will be safe with me. I do that which you have asked me to do,—simply because you have asked it. Burn this at once,—because I ask it."

Phineas destroyed the note, tearing it into atoms, the moment that he had read it and re-read it. Of course he would go to Portman Square at the hour named. Of course he would take his chance. He was not buoyed up by much of hope;—but even though there were no hope, he would take his chance.

When Lord Brentford had first told Phineas of his promotion, he had also asked the new Lord of the Treasury to make a certain communication on his behalf to his son. This Phineas had found himself obliged to promise to do;—and he had done it. The letter had been difficult enough to write,—but he had written it. After having made the promise, he had found himself bound to keep it.

"Dear Lord Chiltern," he had commenced, "I will not think that there was anything in our late encounter to prevent my so addressing you. I now write at the instance of your father, who has heard nothing of our little affair." Then he explained at length Lord Brentford's wishes as he understood them.

"Pray come home," he said, finishing his letter. "Touching V. E., I feel that I am bound to tell you that I still mean to try my fortune, but that I have no ground for hoping that my fortune will be good. Since the day on the sands, I have never met her but in society. I know you will be glad to hear that my wound

was nothing; and I think you will be glad to hear that I have got my foot on to the ladder of promotion.

"Yours always,

"PHINEAS FINN."

Now he had to try his fortune,—that fortune of which he had told Lord Chiltern that he had no reason for hoping that it would be good. He went direct from his office at the Treasury to Portman Square, resolving that he would take no trouble as to his dress, simply washing his hands and brushing his hair as though he were going down to the House, and he knocked at the Earl's door exactly at the hour named by Lady Laura.

"Miss Effingham," he said, "I am so glad to find you alone."

"Yes," she said, laughing. "I am alone,—a poor unprotected female. But I fear nothing. I have strong reason for believing that Lord Brentford is somewhere about. And Pomfret the butler, who has known me since I was a baby, is a host in himself."

"With such allies you can have nothing to fear," he replied, attempting to carry on a little jest.

"Nor even without them, Mr. Finn. We unprotected females in these days are so self-reliant that our natural protectors fall off from us, finding themselves to be no longer wanted. Now with you,—what can I fear?"

"Nothing,—as I hope."

"There used to be a time, and that not so long ago either, when young gentlemen and ladies were thought to be very dangerous to each other if they were left alone. But propriety is less rampant now, and upon

the whole virtue and morals, with discretion and all that kind of thing, have been the gainers. Don't you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"All the same,—but I don't like to be caught in a trap, Mr. Finn."

"In a trap?"

"Yes;—in a trap. Is there no trap here? If you will say so, I will acknowledge myself to be a dolt, and will beg your pardon."

"I hardly know what you call a trap."

"You were told that I was here?"

He paused a moment before he replied. "Yes, I was told."

"I call that a trap."

"Am I to blame?"

"I don't say that you set it,—but you use it."

"Miss Effingham, of course I have used it. You must know,—I think you must know that I have that to say to you which has made me long for such an opportunity as this."

"And therefore you have called in the assistance of your friend."

"It is true."

"In such matters you should never talk to any one, Mr. Finn. If you cannot fight your own battle, no one can fight it for you."

"Miss Effingham, do you remember our ride at Saulsby?"

"Very well;—as if it were yesterday."

"And do you remember that I asked you a question which you have never answered?"

"I did answer it,—as well as I knew how, so that I might tell you a truth without hurting you."

"It was necessary,—is necessary that I should be hurt sorely, or made perfectly happy. Violet Effingham, I have come to you to ask you to be my wife;—to tell you that I love you, and to ask for your love in return. Whatever may be my fate, the question must be asked, and an answer must be given. I have not hoped that you should tell me that you loved me——"

"For what, then, have you hoped?"

"For not much, indeed;—but if for anything, then for some chance that you might tell me so hereafter."

"If I loved you, I would tell you so now,—instantly. I give you my word of that."

"Can you never love me?"

"What is a woman to answer to such a question? No;—I believe never. I do not think I shall ever wish you to be my husband. You ask me to be plain, and I must be plain."

"Is it because——?" He paused, hardly knowing what the question was which he proposed to himself to ask.

"It is for no because,—for no cause except that simple one which should make any girl refuse any man whom she did not love. Mr. Finn, I could say pleasant things to you on any other subject than this,—because I like you."

"I know that I have nothing to justify my suit."

"You have everything to justify it;—at least I am bound to presume that you have. If you love me,—you are justified."

"You know that I love you."

"I am sorry that it should ever have been so,—very sorry. I can only hope that I have not been in fault."

"Will you try to love me?"

"No;—why should I try? If any trying were necessary, I would try rather not to love you. Why should I try to do that which would displease everybody belonging to me? For myself, I admit your right to address me,—and tell you frankly that it would not be in vain, if I loved you. But I tell you as frankly that such a marriage would not please those whom I am bound to try to please."

He paused a moment before he spoke further. "I shall wait," he said, "and come again."

"What am I to say to that? Do not tease me, so that I be driven to treat you with lack of courtesy. Lady Laura is so much attached to you, and Mr. Kennedy, and Lord Brentford,—and indeed I may say, I myself also, that I trust there may be nothing to mar our good fellowship. Come, Mr. Finn,—say that you will take an answer, and I will give you my hand."

"Give it me," said he. She gave him her hand, and he put it up to his lips and pressed it. "I will wait and come again," he said. "I will assuredly come again." Then he turned from her and went out of the house. At the corner of the square he saw Lady Laura's carriage, but did not stop to speak to her. And she also saw him.

"So you have had a visitor here," said Lady Laura to Violet.

"Yes;—I have been caught in the trap."

"Poor mouse! And has the cat made a meal of you?"

"I fancy he has, after his fashion. There be cats that eat their mice without playing,—and cats that play with their mice, and then eat them; and cats again which only play with their mice, and don't care to eat them. Mr. Finn is a cat of the latter kind, and has had his afternoon's diversion."

"You wrong him there."

"I think not, Laura. I do not mean to say that he would not have liked me to accept him. But, if I can see inside his bosom, such a little job as that he has now done will be looked back upon as one of the past pleasures of his life,—not as a pain.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. MILDMAY'S BILL.

It will be necessary that we should go back in our story for a very short period in order that the reader may be told that Phineas Finn was duly re-elected at Loughton after his appointment at the Treasury Board. There was some little trouble at Loughton, and something more of expense than he had before encountered. Mr. Quintus Slide absolutely came down, and was proposed by Mr. Vellum for the borough. Mr. Vellum being a gentleman learned in the law, and hostile to the interests of the noble owner of Saulsby, was able to raise a little trouble against our hero. Mr. Slide was proposed by Mr. Vellum, and seconded by Mr. Vellum's clerk,—though, as it afterwards appeared, Mr. Vellum's clerk was not in truth an elector,—and went to the poll like a man. He received three votes, and at twelve o'clock withdrew. This in itself could hardly have afforded compensation for the expense which Mr. Slide or his backers must have encountered;—but he had an opportunity of making a speech, every word of which was reported in the People's Banner; and if the speech was made in the language given in the report, Mr. Slide was really possessed of some oratorical power. Most of those who read the speech in the columns of the People's Banner were probably not aware how favourable an opportunity of

retouching his sentences in type had been given to Mr. Slide by the fact of his connection with the newspaper. The speech had been very severe upon our hero; and though the speaker had been so hooted and pelted at Loughton as to have been altogether inaudible,—so maltreated that in point of fact he had not been able to speak above a tenth part of his speech at all,—nevertheless the speech did give Phineas a certain amount of pain. Why Phineas should have read it who can tell? But who is there that abstains from reading that which is printed in abuse of himself?

In the speech as it was printed Mr. Slide declared that he had no thought of being returned for the borough. He knew too well how the borough was managed, what slaves the electors were;—how they groaned under a tyranny from which hitherto they had been unable to release themselves. Of course the Earl's nominee, his lacquey, as the honourable gentleman might be called, would be returned. The Earl could order them to return whichever of his lacqueys he pleased.—There was something peculiarly pleasing to the democratic ear in the word lacquey! Any one serving a big man, whatever the service may be, is the big man's lacquey in the People's Banner.—The speech throughout was very bitter. Mr. Phineas Finn, who had previously served in Parliament as the lacquey of an Irish earl, and had been turned off by him, had now fallen into the service of the English earl, and was the lacquey chosen for the present occasion. But he, Quintus Slide, who boasted himself to be a man of the people,—he could tell them that the days of their thraldom were coming to an end, and that their enfranchisement was near at hand. That friend of the people, Mr.

Turnbull, had a clause in his breeches-pocket which he could either force down the unwilling throat of Mr. Mildmay, or else drive the imbecile Premier from office by carrying it in his teeth. Loughton, as Loughton, must be destroyed, but it should be born again in a better birth as a part of a real electoral district, sending a real member, chosen by a real constituency, to a real Parliament. In those days,—and they would come soon,—Mr. Quintus Slide rather thought that Mr. Phineas Finn would be found "nowhere," and he rather thought also that when he showed himself again, as he certainly should do, in the midst of that democratic electoral district as the popular candidate for the honour of representing it in Parliament, that democratic electoral district would accord to him a reception very different from that which he was now receiving from the Earl's lacqueys in the parliamentary village of Loughton. A prettier bit of fiction than these sentences as composing a part of any speech delivered, or proposed to be delivered, at Loughton, Phineas thought he had never seen. And when he read at the close of the speech that though the Earl's hired bullies did their worst, the remarks of Mr. Slide were received by the people with reiterated cheering, he threw himself back in his chair at the Treasury and roared. The poor fellow had been three minutes on his legs, had received three rotten eggs, and one dead dog, and had retired. But not the half of the speech as printed in the People's Banner has been quoted. The sins of Phineas, who in spite of his inability to open his mouth in public had been made a Treasury hack by the aristocratic influence—"by aristocratic influence not confined to the male sex,"—were described at great length,

and in such language that Phineas for a while was fool enough to think that it would be his duty to belabour Mr. Slide with a horsewhip. This notion, however, did not endure long with him, and when Mr. Monk told him that things of that kind came as a matter of course, he was comforted.

But he found it much more difficult to obtain comfort when he weighed the arguments brought forward against the abominations of such a borough as that for which he sat, and reflected that if Mr. Turnbull brought forward his clause, he, Phineas Finn, would be bound to vote against the clause, knowing the clause to be right, because he was a servant of the Government. The arguments, even though they appeared in the People's Banner, were true arguments; and he had on one occasion admitted their truth to his friend Lady Laura,—in the presence of that great Cabinet Minister, her husband. "What business has such a man as that down there? Is there a single creature who wants him?" Lady Laura had said. "I don't suppose anybody does want Mr. Quintus Slide," Phineas had replied; "but I am disposed to think the electors should choose the man they do want, and that at present they have no choice left to them." "They are quite satisfied," said Lady Laura angrily. "Then, Lady Laura," continued Phineas, "that alone should be sufficient to prove that their privilege of returning a menber to Parliament is too much for them. We can't defend it." "It is defended by tradition," said Mr. Kennedy. "And by its great utility," said Lady Laura, bowing to the young member who was present, and forgetting that very useless old gentleman, her cousin, who had sat for the borough for many years. "In this country

it does n't do to go too fast," said Mr. Kennedy. "And then the mixture of vulgarity, falsehood, and pretence!" said Lady Laura, shuddering as her mind recurred to the fact that Mr. Quintus Slide had contaminated Loughton by his presence. "I am told that they hardly let him leave the place alive."

Whatever Mr. Kennedy and Lady Laura might think about Loughton and the general question of small boroughs, it was found by the Government, to their great cost, that Mr. Turnbull's clause was a reality. After two months of hard work, all questions of franchise had been settled, rating and renting, new and new-fangled, fancy franchises and those which no one fancied, franchises for boroughs and franchises for counties, franchises single, dual, three-cornered, and four-sided,—by various clauses to which the Committee of the whole House had agreed after some score of divisions,—the matter of the franchise had been settled. No doubt there was the House of Lords, and there might yet be shipwreck. But it was generally believed that the Lords would hardly look at the bill, —that they would not even venture on an amendment. The Lords would only be too happy to let the matter be settled by the Commons themselves. But then, after the franchise, came redistribution. How sick of the subject were all members of the Government, no one could tell who did not see their weary faces. The whole House was sick, having been whipped into various lobbies, night after night, during the heat of the summer, for weeks past. Redistribution! Why should there be any redistribution? They had got, or would get, a beautiful franchise. Could they not see what that would do for them? Why redistribute anything?

But, alas, it was too late to go back to so blessed an idea as that! Redistribution they must have. But there should be as little redistribution as possible. Men were sick of it all, and would not be exigeant. Something should be done for overgrown counties;—something for new towns which had prospered in brick and mortar. It would be easy to crush up a peccant borough or two,—a borough that had been discovered in its sin. And a few boroughs now blessed with two members might consent to be blessed only with one. Fifteen small clauses might settle the redistribution,—in spite of Mr. Turnbull,—if only Mr. Daubeny would be good-natured.

Neither the weather, which was very hot, nor the tedium of the session, which had been very great, nor the anxiety of Ministers, which was very pressing, had any effect in impairing the energy of Mr. Turnbull. He was as instant, as oratorical, as hostile, as indignant about redistribution as he had been about the franchise. He had been sure then, and he was sure now, that Ministers desired to burke the question, to deceive the people, to produce a bill that should be no bill. He brought out his clause,—and made Loughton his instance. "Would the honourable gentleman who sat lowest on the Treasury Bench,—who at this moment was in sweet confidential intercourse with the right honourable gentleman now President of the Board of Trade, who had once been a friend of the people,—would the young Lord of the Treasury get up in his place and tell them that no peer of Parliament had at present a voice in sending a member to their House of Commons,—that no peer would have a voice if this bill, as proposed by the Government, were passed

in its present useless, ineffectual, conservative, and most dishonest form?"

Phineas, who replied to this, and who told Mr. Turnbull that he himself could not answer for any peers,—but that he thought it probable that most peers would, by their opinions, somewhat influence the opinions of some electors,—was thought to have got out of his difficulty very well. But there was the clause of Mr. Turnbull to be dealt with,—a clause directly disfranchising seven single-winged boroughs, of which Loughton was of course one,—a clause to which the Government must either submit or object. Submission would be certain defeat in one way, and objection would be as certain defeat in another,—if the gentlemen on the other side were not disposed to assist the Ministers. It was said that the Cabinet was divided. Mr. Gresham and Mr. Monk were for letting the seven boroughs go. Mr. Mildmay could not bring himself to obey Mr. Turnbull, and Mr. Palliser supported him. When Mr. Mildmay was told that Mr. Daubeny would certainly go into the same lobby with Mr. Turnbull respecting the seven boroughs, he was reported to have said that in that case Mr. Daubeny must be prepared with a Government. Mr. Daubeny made a beautiful speech about the seven boroughs;—the seven sins, and seven stars, and seven churches, and seven lamps. He would make no party question of this. Gentlemen who usually acted with him would vote as their own sense of right or wrong directed them;—from which expression of a special sanction it was considered that these gentlemen were not accustomed to exercise the privilege now accorded to them. But in regarding the question as one of right and wrong, and in looking at

what he believed to be both the wish of the country and its interests, he, Mr. Daubeny,—he, himself, being simply a humble member of that House,—must support the clause of the honourable gentleman. Almost all those to whom had been surrendered the privilege of using their own judgment for that occasion only, used it discreetly,—as their chief had used it himself, —and Mr. Turnbull carried his clause by a majority of fifteen. It was then 3 A.M., and Mr. Gresham rising after the division, said that his right honourable friend the First Lord of the Treasury was too tired to return to the House, and had requested him to state that the Government would declare their purpose at 6 P.M. on the following evening.

Phineas, though he had made his little speech in answer to Mr. Turnbull with good-humoured flippancy, had recorded his vote in favour of the seven boroughs with a sore heart. Much as he disliked Mr. Turnbull, he knew that Mr. Turnbull was right in this. He had spoken to Mr. Monk on the subject, as it were asking Mr. Monk's permission to throw up his office, and vote against Mr. Mildmay. But Mr. Monk was angry with him, telling him that his conscience was of that restless, uneasy sort which is neither useful nor manly. "We all know," said Mr. Monk, "and none better than Mr. Mildmay, that we cannot justify such a borough as Loughton by the theory of our parliamentary representation,—any more than we can justify the fact that Huntingdonshire should return as many members as the East Riding. There must be compromises, and you should trust to others who have studied the matter more thoroughly than you, to say how far the compromise should go at the present moment."

"It is the influence of the peer, not the paucity of the electors," said Phineas.

"And has no peer any influence in a county? Would you disfranchise Westmoreland? Believe me, Finn, if you want to be useful, you must submit yourself in such matters to those with whom you act."

Phineas had no answer to make, but he was not happy in his mind. And he was the less happy, perhaps, because he was very sure that Mr. Mildmay would be beaten. Mr. Low in these days harassed him sorely. Mr. Low was very keen against such boroughs as Loughton, declaring that Mr. Daubeny was quite right to join his standard to that of Mr. Turnbull on such an issue. Mr. Low was the reformer now, and Phineas found himself obliged to fight a losing battle on behalf of an acknowledged abuse. He never went near Bunce; but, unfortunately for him, Bunce caught him once in the street and showed him no mercy. "Slide was a little 'eavy on you in the Banner the other day, —eh, Mr. Finn?—too 'eavy, as I told him."

"Mr. Slide can be just as heavy as he pleases, Bunce."

"That 's in course. The press is free, thank God, —as yet. But it was n't any good rattling away at the Earl's little borough when it 's sure to go. Of course it 'll go, Mr. Finn."

"I think it will."

"The whole seven on 'em. The 'Ouse could n't but do it. They tell me it 's all Mr. Mildmay's own work, sticking out for keeping on 'em. He 's very old, and so we 'll forgive him. But he must go, Mr. Finn."

"We shall know all about that soon, Bunce."

"If you don't get another seat, Mr. Finn, I suppose

we shall see you back at the Inn. I hope we may. It 's better than being member for Loughton, Mr. Finn;—you may be sure of that." And then Mr. Bunce passed on.

Mr. Turnbull carried his clause, and Loughton was doomed. Loughton and the other six deadly sins were anathematised, exorcised, and finally got rid of out of the world by the voices of the gentlemen who had been proclaiming the beauty of such pleasant vices all their lives, and who in their hearts hated all changes that tended towards popular representation. But not the less was Mr. Mildmay beaten; and, in accordance with the promise made by his first lieutenant immediately after the vote was taken, the Prime Minister came forward on the next evening and made his statement. He had already put his resignation into the hands of Her Majesty, and Her Majesty had graciously accepted it. He was very old, and felt that the time had come in which it behoved him to retire into that leisure which he thought he had, perhaps, earned. He had hoped to carry this bill as the last act of his political life; but he was too old, too stiff, as he said, in his prejudices, to bend further than he had bent already, and he must leave the completion of the matter in other hands. Her Majesty had sent for Mr. Gresham, and Mr. Gresham had already seen Her Majesty. Mr. Gresham and his other colleagues, though they dissented from the clause which had been carried by the united efforts of gentlemen opposite to him, and of gentlemen below him on his own side of the House, were younger men than he, and would, for the country's sake,—and for the sake of Her Majesty,—endeavour to carry the bill through. There would

then, of course, be a dissolution, and the future Government would, no doubt, depend on the choice of the country. From all which it was understood that Mr. Gresham was to go on with the bill to a conclusion, whatever might be the divisions carried against him, and that a new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs must be chosen. Phineas understood, also, that he had lost his seat at Loughton. For the borough of Loughton there would never again be an election. "If I had been Mr. Mildmay, I would have thrown the bill up altogether," Lord Brentford said afterwards: "but of course it was not for me to interfere."

The session was protracted for two months after that,—beyond the time at which grouse should have been shot,—and by the 23rd of August became the law of the land. "I shall never get over it," said Mr. Rattler to Mr. Finn, seated one terribly hot evening on a bench behind the Cabinet Ministers,—"never. I don't suppose such a session for work was ever known before. Think what it is to have to keep men together in August, with the thermometer at 81°, and the river stinking like,—like the very mischief." Mr. Rattler, however, did not die.

On the last day of the session Laurence Fitzgibbon resigned. Rumours reached the ears of Phineas as to the cause of this, but no certain cause was told him. It was said that Lord Cantrip had insisted upon it, Laurence having by mischance been called upon for some official statement during an unfortunate period of absence. There was, however, a mystery about it; —but the mystery was not half so wonderful as the triumph to Phineas, when Mr. Gresham offered him the place.

"But I shall have no seat," said Phineas.

"We shall none of us have seats to-morrow," said Mr. Gresham.

"But I shall be at a loss to find a place to stand for."

"The election will not come on till November, and you must look about you. Both Mr. Monk and Lord Brentford seem to think you will be in the House."

And so the bill was carried, and the session was ended.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"THE DUKE."

By the middle of September there was assembled a large party at Matching Priory, a country mansion belonging to Mr. Plantagenet Palliser. The men had certainly been chosen in reference to their political feelings and position,—for there was not a guest in the house who had voted for Mr. Turnbull's clause, or the wife or daughter, or sister of any one who had so voted. Indeed, in these days politics ran so high that among politicians all social gatherings were brought together with some reference to the state of parties. Phineas was invited, and when he arrived at Matching he found that half the Cabinet was there. Mr. Kennedy was not there, nor was Lady Laura. Mr. Monk was there, and the Duke,—with the Duchess, and Mr. Gresham, and Lord Thrift; Mrs. Max Goesler was there also, and Mrs. Bonteen,—Mr. Bonteen being detained somewhere out of the way; and Violet Effingham was expected in two days, and Lord Chiltern at the end of the week. Lady Glencora took an opportunity of imparting this latter information to Phineas very soon after his arrival; and Phineas, as he watched her eye and her mouth while she spoke, was quite sure that Lady Glencora knew the story of the duel. "I shall be delighted to see him again," said Phineas. "That is all right," said Lady Glencora. There were also there Mr. and Mrs. Grey, who were great friends of the

Pallisers,—and on the very day on which Phineas reached Matching, at half an hour before the time for dressing, the Duke of Omnium arrived. Now, Mr. Palliser was the Duke's nephew and heir,—and the Duke of Omnium was a very great person indeed. I hardly know why it should have been so, but the Duke of Omnium was certainly a greater man in public estimation than the other duke then present,—the Duke of St. Bungay. The Duke of St. Bungay was a useful man, and had been so all his life, sitting in Cabinets and serving his country, constant as any peer in the House of Lords, always ready to take on his own shoulders any troublesome work required of him, than whom Mr. Mildmay, and Mr. Mildmay's predecessor at the head of the liberal party, had had no more devoted adherent. But the Duke of Omnium had never yet done a day's work on behalf of his country. They both wore the Garter, the Duke of St. Bungay having earned it by service, the Duke of Omnium having been decorated with the blue ribbon,—because he was Duke of Omnium. The one was a moral, good man, a good husband, a good father, and a good friend. The other,—did not bear quite so high a reputation. But men and women thought but little of the Duke of St. Bungay, while the other duke was regarded with an almost reverential awe. I think the secret lay in the simple fact that the Duke of Omnium had not been common in the eyes of the people. He had contrived to envelop himself in something of the ancient mystery of wealth and rank. Within three minutes of the Duke's arrival Mrs. Bonteen, with an air of great importance, whispered a word to Phineas. "He has come. He arrived exactly at seven!"

"Who has come?" Phineas asked.

"The Duke of Omnium!" she said, almost reprimanding him by her tone of voice for his indifference. "There has been a great doubt whether or no he would show himself at last. Lady Glencora told me that he never will pledge himself. I am so glad he has come."

"I don't think I ever saw him," said Phineas.

"Oh, I have seen him,—a magnificent-looking man! I think it is so very nice of Lady Glencora getting him to meet us. It is very rarely that he will join in a great party, but they say Lady Glencora can do anything with him since the heir was born. I suppose you have heard all about that."

"No," said Phineas; "I have heard nothing of the heir, but I know that there are three or four babies."

"There was no heir, you know, for a year and a half, and they were all au désespoir; and the Duke was very nearly quarrelling with his nephew; and Mr. Palliser——; you know it had very nearly come to a separation."

"I don't know anything at all about it," said Phineas, who was not very fond of the lady who was giving him the information.

"It is so, I can assure you; but since the boy was born Lady Glencora can do anything with the Duke. She made him go to Ascot last spring, and he presented her with the favourite for one of the races on the very morning the horse ran. They say he gave three thousand pounds for him."

"And did Lady Glencora win?"

"No;—the horse lost; and Mr. Palliser has never known what to do with him since. But it was very pretty of the Duke;—was it not?"

Phineas, though he had intended to show to Mrs. Bonteen how little he thought about the Duke of Omnium,—how small was his respect for a great peer who took no part in politics,—could not protect himself from a certain feeling of anxiety as to the aspect and gait and words of the man of whom people thought so much, of whom he had heard so often, and of whom he had seen so little. He told himself that the Duke of Omnium should be no more to him than any other man, but yet the Duke of Omnium was more to him than other men. When he came down into the drawing-room he was angry with himself, and stood apart; —and was then angry with himself again because he stood apart. Why should he make a difference in his own bearing because there was such a man in the company? And yet he could not avoid it. When he entered the room the Duke was standing in a large bow-window, and two or three ladies and two or three men were standing round him. Phineas would not go near the group, telling himself that he would not approach a man so grand as was the Duke of Omnium. He saw Madame Max Goesler among the party, and after a while he saw her retreat. As she retreated, Phineas knew that some words from Madame Max Goesler had not been received with the graciousness which she had expected. There was the prettiest smile in the world on the lady's face, and she took a corner on a sofa with an air of perfect satisfaction. But yet Phineas knew that she had received a wound.

"I called twice on you in London," said Phineas, coming up close to her, "but was not fortunate enough to find you!"

"Yes;—but you came so late in the season as to

make it impossible that there should be any arrangements for our meeting. What can any woman do when a gentleman calls on her in August?"

"I came in July."

"Yes, you did; on the 31st. I keep the most accurate record of all such things, Mr. Finn. But let us hope that we may have better luck next year. In the meantime, we can only enjoy the good things that are going."

"Socially, or politically, Madame Goesler?"

"Oh, socially. How can I mean anything else when the Duke of Omnium is here? I feel so much taller at being in the same house with him. Do not you? But you are a spoilt child of fortune, and perhaps you have met him before."

"I think I once saw the back of a hat in the park, and somebody told me that the Duke's head was inside it."

"And you have never seen him but that once?"

"Never but that once,—till now."

"And do not you feel elated?"

"Of course I do. For what do you take me, Madame Goesler?"

"I do,—immensely. I believe him to be a fool, and I never heard of his doing a kind act to anybody in my life."

"Not when he gave the racehorse to Lady Glencora?"

"I wonder whether that was true. Did you ever hear of such an absurdity? As I was saying, I don't think he ever did anything for anybody;—but then, you know, to be Duke of Omnium! It is n't necessary,—is it,—that a Duke of Omnium should do anything except be Duke of Omnium?"

At this moment Lady Glencora came up to Phineas, and took him across to the Duke. The Duke had expressed a desire to be introduced to him. Phineas, half-pleased and half-disgusted, had no alternative, and followed Lady Glencora. The Duke shook hands with him, and made a little bow, and said something about the garrotters, which Phineas, in his confusion, did not quite understand. He tried to reply as he would have replied to anybody else, but the weight of the Duke's majesty was too much for him, and he bungled. The Duke made another little bow, and in a moment was speaking a word of condescension to some other favoured individual. Phineas retreated altogether disgusted,—hating the Duke, but hating himself worse; but he would not retreat in the direction of Madame Max Goesler. It might suit that lady to take an instant little revenge for her discomfiture, but it did not suit him to do so. The question with him would be, whether in some future part of his career it might not be his duty to assist in putting down Dukes of Omnium.

At dinner Phineas sat between Mrs. Bonteen and the Duchess of St. Bungay, and did not find himself very happy. At the other end of the table the Duke,—the great Duke, was seated at Lady Glencora's right hand, and on his other side Fortune had placed Madame Max Goesler. The greatest interest which Phineas had during the dinner was in watching the operations, —the triumphantly successful operations of that lady. Before dinner she had been wounded by the Duke. The Duke had not condescended to accord the honour of his little bow of graciousness to some little flattering morsel of wit which the lady had uttered on his behoof.

She had said a sharp word or two in her momentary anger to Phineas; but when Fortune was so good to her in that matter of her place at dinner, she was not fool enough to throw away her chance. Throughout the soup and fish she was very quiet. She said a word or two after her first glass of champagne. The Duke refused two dishes, one after another, and then she glided into conversation. By the time that he had his roast mutton before him she was in full play, and as she eat her peach, the Duke was bending over her with his most gracious smile.

"Did n't you think the session was very long, Mr. Finn?" said the Duchess to Phineas.

"Very long indeed, Duchess," said Phineas, with his attention still fixed on Madame Max Goesler.

"The Duke found it very troublesome."

"I dare say he did," said Phineas. That duke and that duchess were no more than any other man and any other man's wife. The session had not been longer to the Duke of St. Bungay than to all the public servants. Phineas had the greatest possible respect for the Duke of St. Bungay, but he could not take much interest in the wailings of the Duchess on her husband's behalf.

"And things do seem to be very uncomfortable now," said the Duchess,—thinking partly of the resignation of Mr. Mildmay, and partly of the fact that her own old peculiar maid who had lived with her for thirty years had retired into private life.

"Not so very bad, Duchess, I hope," said Phineas, observing that at this moment Madame Max Goesler's eyes were brilliant with triumph. Then there came upon him a sudden ambition,—that he would like to "cut out" the Duke of Omnium in the estimation of

Madame Max Goesler. The brightness of Madame Max Goesler's eyes had not been thrown away upon our hero.

Violet Effingham came at the appointed time, and, to the surprise of Phineas, was brought to Matching by Lord Brentford. Phineas at first thought that it was intended that the Earl and his son should meet and make up their quarrel at Mr. Palliser's house. But Lord Brentford stayed only one night, and Phineas on the next morning heard the whole history of his coming and going from Violet. "I have almost been on my knees to him to stay," she said. "Indeed, I did go on my knees,—actually on my knees."

"And what did he say?"

"He put his arm round me and kissed me, and,—and,—I cannot tell you all that he said. But it ended in this,—that if Chiltern can be made to go to Saulsby, fatted calves without stint will be killed. I shall do all I can to make him go; and so must you, Mr. Finn. Of course that silly affair in foreign parts is not to make any difference between you two."

Phineas smiled, and said he would do his best, and looked up into her face, and was just able to talk to her as though things were going comfortably with him. But his heart was very cold. As Violet had spoken to him about Lord Chiltern there had come upon him, for the first time,—for the first time since he had known that Lord Chiltern had been refused,—an idea, a doubt, whether even yet Violet might not become Lord Chiltern's wife. His heart was very sad, but he struggled on,—declaring that it was incumbent on them both to bring together the father and son.

"I am so glad to hear you say so, Mr. Finn," said

Violet. "I really do believe that you can do more towards it than any one else. Lord Chiltern would think nothing of my advice,—would hardly speak to me on such a subject. But he respects you as well as likes you, and not the less because of what has occurred."

How was it that Violet should know aught of the respect or liking felt by this rejected suitor for that other suitor,—who had also been rejected? And how was it that she was thus able to talk of one of them to the other, as though neither of them had ever come forward with such a suit? Phineas felt his position to be so strange as to be almost burdensome. He had told Violet, when she had refused him, very plainly, that he should come again to her, and ask once more for the great gift which he coveted. But he could not ask again now. In the first place, there was that in her manner which made him sure that were he to do so, he would ask in vain; and then he felt that she was placing a special confidence in him, against which he would commit a sin were he to use her present intimacy with him for purposes of making love. They two were to put their shoulders together to help Lord Chiltern, and while doing so he could not continue a suit which would be felt by both of them to be hostile to Lord Chiltern. There might be opportunity for a chance word, and if so the chance word should be spoken; but he could not make a deliberate attack, such as he had made in Portman Square. Violet also probably understood that she had not now been caught in a mousetrap.

The Duke was to spend four days at Matching, and on the third day,—the day before Lord Chiltern was expected,—he was to be seen riding with Madame

Max Goesler by his side. Madame Max Goesler was known as a perfect horsewoman,—one, indeed, who was rather fond of going a little fast on horseback, and who rode well to hounds. But the Duke seldom moved out of a walk, and on this occasion Madame Max was as steady in her seat and almost as slow as the mounted ghost in Don Juan. But it was said by some there, especially by Mrs. Bonteen, that the conversation between them was not slow. And on the next morning the Duke and Madame Max Goesler were together again before luncheon, standing on a terrace at the back of the house, looking down on a party who were playing croquet on the lawn.

"Do you never play?" said the Duke.

"Oh yes;—one does everything a little."

"I am sure you would play well. Why do you not play now?"

"No;—I shall not play now."

"I should like to see you with your mallet."

"I am sorry your Grace cannot be gratified. I have played croquet till I am tired of it, and have come to think it is only fit for boys and girls. The great thing is to give them opportunities for flirting, and it does that."

"And do you never flirt, Madame Goesler?"

"Never at croquet, Duke."

"And what with you is the choicest time?"

"That depends on so many things,—and so much on the chosen person. What do you recommend?"

"Ah,—I am so ignorant. I can recommend nothing."

"What do you say to a mountain-top at dawn on a summer day?" asked Madame Max Goesler.

"You make me shiver," said the Duke.

"Or a boat on a lake on a summer evening, or a

good lead after hounds with nobody else within three fields, or the bottom of a salt-mine, or the deck of an ocean steamer, or a military hospital in time of war, or a railway journey from Paris to Marseilles?"

"Madame Max Goesler, you have the most uncomfortable ideas."

"I have no doubt your Grace has tried each of them,—successfully. But perhaps, after all, a comfortable chair over a good fire, in a pretty room, beats everything."

"I think it does,—certainly," said the Duke. Then he whispered something at which Madame Max Goesler blushed and smiled, and immediately after that she followed those who had already gone in to lunch.

Mrs. Bonteen had been hovering round the spot on the terrace on which the Duke and Madame Max Goesler had been standing, looking on with envious eyes, meditating some attack, some interruption, some excuse for an interpolation, but her courage had failed her and she had not dared to approach. The Duke had known nothing of the hovering propinquity of Mrs. Bonteen, but Madame Goesler had seen and had understood it all.

"Dear Mrs. Bonteen," she said afterwards, "why did you not come and join us? The Duke was so pleasant."

"Two is company, and three is none," said Mrs. Bonteen, who in her anger was hardly able to choose her words quite as well as she might have done had she been more cool.

"Our friend Madame Max has made quite a new conquest," said Mrs. Bonteen to Lady Glencora.

"I am so pleased," said Lady Glencora, with apparently unaffected delight. "It is such a great thing to get anybody to amuse my uncle. You see everybody cannot talk to him, and he will not talk to everybody."

"He talked enough to her in all conscience," said Mrs. Bonteen, who was now more angry than ever.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DUELLISTS MEET.

Lord Chiltern arrived, and Phineas was a little nervous as to their meeting. He came back from shooting on the day in question, and was told by the servant that Lord Chiltern was in the house. Phineas went into the billiard-room in his knickerbockers, thinking probably that he might be there, and then into the drawing-room, and at last into the library,—but Lord Chiltern was not to be found. At last he came across Violet.

"Have you seen him?" he asked.

"Yes;—he was with me half an hour since, walking round the gardens."

"And how is he? Come;—tell me something about him."

"I never knew him to be more pleasant. He would give no promise about Saulsby, but he did not say that he would not go."

"Does he know that I am here?"

"Yes;—I told him so. I told him how much pleasure I should have in seeing you two together,—as friends."

"And what did he say?"

"He laughed, and said you were the best fellow in the world. You see I am obliged to be explicit."

"But why did he laugh?" Phineas asked.

E. J. Read

"Well, old fellow"

"He did not tell me, but I suppose it was because he was thinking of a little trip he once took to Belgium, and he perceived that I knew all about it."

"I wonder who told you. But never mind. I do not mean to ask any questions. As I do not like that our first meeting should be before all the people in the drawing-room, I will go to him in his own room."

"Do, do;—that will be so nice of you."

Phineas sent his card up by a servant, and in a few minutes was standing with his hand on the lock of Lord Chiltern's door. The last time he had seen this man, they had met with pistols in their hands to shoot at each other, and Lord Chiltern had in truth done his very best to shoot his opponent. The cause of quarrel was the same between them as ever. Phineas had not given up Violet, and had no intention of giving her up. And he had received no intimation whatever from his rival that there was to be a truce between them. Phineas had indeed written in friendship to Lord Chiltern, but he had received no answer;—and nothing of certainty was to be gathered from the report which Violet had just made. It might well be that Lord Chiltern would turn upon him now in his wrath, and that there would be some scene which in a strange house would be obviously objectionable. Nevertheless he had resolved that even that would be better than a chance encounter among strangers in a drawing-room. So the door was opened and the two men met.

"Well, old fellow," said Lord Chiltern, laughing. Then all doubt was over, and in a moment Phineas was shaking his former,—and present friend, warmly by the hand. "So we 've come to be an Under-Secretary, have we?—and all that kind of thing."

"I had to get into harness,—when the harness offered itself," said Phineas.

"I suppose so. It 's a deuce of a bore, is n't it?"

"I always liked work, you know."

"I thought you liked hunting better. You used to ride as if you did. There 's Bonebreaker back again in the stable for you. That poor fool who bought him could do nothing with him, and I let him have his money back."

"I don't see why you should have done that."

"Because I was the biggest fool of the two. Do you remember when that brute got me down under the bank in the river? That was about the nearest touch I ever had. Lord bless me;—how he did squeeze me! So here you are;—staying with the Pallisers,—one of a Government party, I suppose. But what are you going to do for a seat, my friend?"

"Don't talk about that yet, Chiltern."

"A sore subject,—is n't it? I think they have been quite right, you know, to put Loughton into the melting-pot,—though I 'm sorry enough for your sake."

"Quite right," said Phineas.

"And yet you voted against it, old chap? But, come; I 'm not going to be down upon you. So my father has been here?"

"Yes;—he was here for a day or two."

"Violet has just been telling me. You and he are as good friends as ever?"

"I trust we are."

"He never heard of that little affair?" And Lord Chiltern nodded his head, intending to indicate the direction of Blankenberg.

"I do not think he has as yet."

"So Violet tells me. Of course you know that she has heard all about it."

"I have reason to suppose as much."

"And so does Laura."

"I told her myself," said Phineas.

"The deuce you did! But I dare say it was for the best. It 's a pity you had not proclaimed it at Charing Cross, and then nobody would have believed a word about it. Of course my father will hear it some day."

"You are going to Saulsby, I hope, Chiltern?"

"That question is easier asked than answered. It is quite true that the great difficulty has been got over. Laura has had her money. And if my father will only acknowledge that he has wronged me throughout, from beginning to end, I will go to Saulsby to-morrow;—and would cut you out at Loughton the next day, only that Loughton is not Loughton any longer."

"You cannot expect your father to do that."

"No;—and therefore there is a difficulty. So you 've had that awfully ponderous Duke here. How did you get on with him?"

"Admirably. He condescended to do something which he called shaking hands with me."

"He is the greatest old dust out," said Lord Chiltern disrespectfully. "Did he take any notice of Violet?"

"Not that I observed."

"He ought not to be allowed into the same room with her." After that there was a short pause, and Phineas felt some hesitation in speaking of Miss Effingham to Lord Chiltern. "And how do you get on with her?" asked Lord Chiltern. Here was a question for a man to answer. The question was so hard to be

answered, that Phineas did not at first make any attempt to answer it. "You know exactly the ground that I stand on," continued Lord Chiltern. "She has refused me three times. Have you been more fortunate?"

Lord Chiltern, as he asked his question, looked full into Finn's face in a manner that was irresistible. His look was not one of anger nor even of pride. It was not, indeed, without a strong dash of fun. But such as it was it showed Phineas that Lord Chiltern intended to have an answer. "No," said he at last, "I have not been more fortunate."

"Perhaps you have changed your mind," said his host.

"No;—I have not changed my mind," said Phineas quickly.

"How stands it then? Come;—let us be honest to each other. I told you down at Willingford that I would quarrel with any man who attempted to cut me out with Violet Effingham. You made up your mind that you would do so, and therefore I quarrelled with you. But we can't always be fighting duels."

"I hope we may not have to fight another."

"No;—it would be absurd," said Lord Chiltern. "I rather think that what we did was absurd. But upon my life I did not see any other way out of it. However, that is over. How is it to be now?"

"What am I to say in answer to that?" asked Phineas.

"Just the truth. You have asked her, I suppose?"

"Yes;—I have asked her."

"And she has refused you?"

"Yes;—she has refused me."

"And you mean to ask her again?"

"I shall;—if I ever think that there is a chance. Indeed, Chiltern, I believe I shall whether I think that I have any chance or not."

"Then we start fairly, Finn. I certainly shall do so. I believe I once told you that I never would;—but that was long before I suspected that you would enter for the same plate. What a man says on such a matter when he is down in the mouth goes for nothing. Now we understand each other, and you had better go and dress. The bell rang nearly half an hour ago, and my fellow is hanging about outside the door."

The interview had in one respect been very pleasant to Phineas, and in another it had been very bitter. It was pleasant to him to know that he and Lord Chiltern were again friends. It was a delight to him to feel that this half-savage but high-spirited young nobleman, who had been so anxious to fight with him and to shoot him, was nevertheless ready to own that he had behaved well. Lord Chiltern had in fact acknowledged that though he had been anxious to blow out our hero's brains, he was aware all the time that our hero was a good sort of fellow. Phineas understood this, and felt that it was pleasant. But with this understanding, and accompanying this pleasure, there was a conviction in his heart that the distance between Lord Chiltern and Violet would daily grow to be less and still less,—and that Lord Chiltern could afford to be generous. If Miss Effingham could teach herself to be fond of Lord Chiltern, what had he, Phineas Finn, to offer in opposition to the claims of such a suitor?

That evening Lord Chiltern took Miss Effingham out to dinner. Phineas told himself that this was of course so arranged by Lady Glencora, with the express

view of serving the Saulsby interest. It was almost nothing to him at the moment that Madame Max Goesler was intrusted to him. He had his ambition respecting Madame Max Goesler; but that for the time was in abeyance. He could hardly keep his eyes off Miss Effingham. And yet, as he well knew, his observation of her must be quite useless. He knew beforehand, with absolute accuracy, the manner in which she would treat her lover. She would be kind, genial, friendly, confidential, nay, affectionate; and yet her manner would mean nothing,—would give no clue to her future decision either for or against Lord Chiltern. It was, as Phineas thought, a peculiarity with Violet Effingham that she could treat her rejected lovers as dear familiar friends immediately after her rejection of them.

"Mr. Finn," said Madame Max Goesler, "your eyes and ears are tell-tales of your passion."

"I hope not," said Phineas, "as I certainly do not wish that any one should guess how strong is my regard for you."

"That is prettily turned,—very prettily turned; and shows more readiness of wit than I gave you credit for under your present suffering. But of course we all know where your heart is. Men do not undertake perilous journeys to Belgium for nothing."

"That unfortunate journey to Belgium! But, dear Madame Max, really nobody knows why I went."

"You met Lord Chiltern there?"

"Oh yes;—I met Lord Chiltern there."

"And there was a duel?"

"Madame Max,—you must not ask me to criminate myself."

"Of course there was, and of course it was about Miss Effingham, and of course the lady thinks herself bound to refuse both the gentlemen who were so very wicked, and of course——"

"Well,—what follows?"

"Ah!—if you have not wit enough to see, I do not think it can be my duty to tell you. But I wished to caution you as a friend that your eyes and ears should be more under your command."

"You will go to Saulsby?" Violet said to Lord Chiltern.

"I cannot possibly tell as yet," said he, frowning.

"Then I can tell you that you ought to go. I do not care a bit for your frowns. What does the fifth commandment say?"

"If you have no better arguments than the commandments, Violet——"

"There can be none better. Do you mean to say that the commandments are nothing to you?"

"I mean to say that I shan't go to Saulsby because I am told in the twentieth chapter of Exodus to honour my father and mother,—and that I should n't believe anybody who told me that he did anything because of the commandments."

"Oh, Lord Chiltern!"

"People are so prejudiced and so used to humbug that for the most part they do not in the least know their own motives for what they do. I will go to Saulsby to-morrow,—for a reward."

"For what reward?" said Violet, blushing.

"For the only one in the world that could tempt me to do anything."

"You should go for the sake of duty. I should not

even care to see you go, much as I long for it, if that feeling did not take you there."

It was arranged that Phineas and Lord Chiltern were to leave Matching together. Phineas was to remain at his office all October, and in November the general election was to take place. What he had hitherto heard about a future seat was most vague, but he was to meet Rattler and Barrington Erle in London, and it had been understood that Barrington Erle, who was now at Saulsby, was to make some inquiry as to that group of boroughs of which Loughton at this moment formed one. But as Loughton was the smallest of four boroughs, and as one of the four had for many years had a representative of its own, Phineas feared that no success would be found there. In his present agony he began to think that there might be a strong plea made for a few private seats in the House of Commons, and that the propriety of throwing Loughton into the melting-pot was, after all, open to question. He and Lord Chiltern were to return to London together, and Lord Chiltern, according to his present scheme, was to proceed at once to Willingford to look after the cub-hunting. Nothing that either Violet or Phineas could say to him would induce him to promise to go to Saulsby. When Phineas pressed it, he was told by Lord Chiltern that he was a fool for his pains,—by which Phineas understood perfectly well that when Lord Chiltern did go to Saulsby, he, Phineas, was to take that as strong evidence that everything was over for him as regarded Violet Effingham. When Violet expressed her eagerness that the visit should be made, she was stopped with an assurance that she could have it done at once if she pleased.

Let him only be enabled to carry with him the tidings of his betrothal, and he would start for his father's house without an hour's delay. But this authority Violet would not give him. When he answered her after this fashion she could only tell him that he was ungenerous. "At any rate I am not false," he replied on one occasion. "What I say is the truth."

There was a very tender parting between Phineas and Madame Max Goesler. She had learned from him pretty nearly all his history, and certainly knew more of the reality of his affairs than any of those in London who had been his most staunch friends. "Of course you 'll get a seat," she said as he took his leave of her. "If I understand it at all, they never throw over an ally so useful as you are."

"But the intention is that in this matter nobody shall any longer have the power of throwing over, or of not throwing over, anybody."

"That is all very well, my friend; but cakes will still be hot in the mouth, even though Mr. Daubeny turn purist, with Mr. Turnbull to help him. If you want any assistance in finding a seat you will not go to the People's Banner,—even yet."

"Certainly not to the People's Banner."

"I don't quite understand what the franchise is," continued Madame Max Goesler.

"Household in boroughs," said Phineas with some energy.

"Very well;—household in boroughs. I dare say that is very fine and very liberal, though I don't comprehend it in the least. And you want a borough. Very well. You won't go to the households. I don't think you will;—not at first, that is."

"Where shall I go then?"

"Oh,—to some great patron of a borough;—or to a club;—or perhaps to some great firm. The households will know nothing about it till they are told. Is not that it?"

"The truth is, Madame Max, I do not know where I shall go. I am like a child lost in a wood. And you may understand this;—if you do not see me in Park Lane before the end of January, I shall have perished in the wood."

"Then I will come and find you,—with a troop of householders. You will come. You will be there. I do not believe in death coming without signs. You are full of life." As she spoke, she had hold of his hand, and there was nobody near them. They were in a little book-room inside the library at Matching, and the door, though not latched, was nearly closed. Phineas had flattered himself that Madame Goesler had retreated there in order that this farewell might be spoken without interruption. "And, Mr. Finn;—I wonder whether I may say one thing," she continued.

"You may say anything to me," he replied.

"No,—not in this country, in this England. There are things one may not say here,—that are tabooed by a sort of consent,—and that without any reason." She paused again, and Phineas was at a loss to think what was the subject on which she was about to speak. Could she mean——? No; she could not mean to give him any outward plain-spoken sign that she was attached to him. It was the peculiar merit of this man that he was not vain, though much was done to him to fill him with vanity; and as the idea crossed his brain, he hated himself because it had been there.

"To me you may say anything, Madame Goesler," he said,—"here in England, as plainly as though we were in Vienna."

"But I cannot say it in English," she said. Then in French, blushing and laughing as she spoke,—almost stammering in spite of her usual self-confidence,—she told him that accident had made her rich, full of money. Money was a drug with her. Money she knew was wanted, even for householders. Would he not understand her, and come to her, and learn from her how faithful a wóman could be?

He still was holding her by the hand, and he now raised it to his lips and kissed it. "The offer from you," he said, "is as high-minded, as generous, and as honourable as its acceptance by me would be mean-spirited, vile, and ignoble. But whether I fail or whether I succeed, you shall see me before the winter is over."

CHAPTER XXV.

AGAIN SUCCESSFUL.

PHINEAS also said a word of farewell to Violet before he left Matching, but there was nothing peculiar in her little speech to him, or in his to her. "Of course we shall see each other in London. Don't talk of not being in the House. Of course you will be in the House." Then Phineas had shaken his head and smiled. Where was he to find a requisite number of householders prepared to return him? But as he went up to London he told himself that the air of the House of Commons was now the very breath of his nostrils. Life to him without it would be no life. To have come within the reach of the good things of political life, to have made his mark so as to have almost insured future success, to have been the petted young official aspirant of the day,—and then to sink down into the miserable platitudes of private life, to undergo daily attendance in law-courts without a brief, to listen to men who had come to be much below him in estimation and social intercourse, to sit in a wretched chamber up three pairs of stairs at Lincoln's Inn, whereas he was now at this moment provided with a gorgeous apartment looking out into the Park from the Colonial Office in Downing Street, to be attended by a mongrel between a clerk and an errand boy at 17s. 6d. a week instead of by a private secretary who was the son of an earl's sister, and was petted by countesses' daughters innu-

merable,—all this would surely break his heart. He could have done it, so he told himself, and could have taken glory in doing it, had not these other things come in his way. But the other things had come. He had run the risk, and had thrown the dice. And now when the game was so nearly won, must it be that everything should be lost at last?

He knew that nothing was to be gained by melancholy looks at his club, or by show of wretchedness at his office. London was very empty; but the approaching elections still kept some there who otherwise would have been looking after the first flush of pheasants. Barrington Erle was there, and was not long in asking Phineas what were his views.

"Ah;—that is so hard to say. Rattler told me that he would be looking about."

"Rattler is very well in the House," said Barrington, "but he is of no use for anything beyond it. I suppose you were not brought up at the London University?"

"Oh no," said Phineas, remembering the glories of Trinity.

"Because there would have been an opening. What do you say to Stratford,—the new Essex borough?"

"Broadbury the brewer is there already!"

"Yes;—and ready to spend any money you like to name. Let me see. Loughton is grouped with Smotherem, and Walker is a deal too strong at Smotherem to hear of any other claim. I don't think he could dare to propose it. There are the Chelsea hamlets, but it will take a wack of money."

"I have not got a wack of money," said Phineas, laughing.

"That 's the devil of it. I think, if I were you, I

should hark back upon some place in Ireland. Could n't you get Laurence to give you up his seat ? "

"What! Fitzgibbon? "

"Yes. He has not a ghost of a chance of getting into office again. Nothing on earth would induce him to look at a paper during all those weeks he was at the Colonial Office; and when Cantrip spoke to him, all he said was, 'Ah, bother!' Cantrip did not like it, I can tell you."

"But that would n't make him give up his seat."

"Of course you 'd have to arrange it." By which Phineas understood Barrington Erle to mean that he, Phineas, was in some way to give to Laurence Fitzgibbon some adequate compensation for the surrender of his position as a county member.

"I 'm afraid that 's out of the question," said Phineas. "If he were to go, I should not get it."

"Would you have a chance at Loughshane ? "

"I was thinking of trying it," said Phineas.

"Of course you know that Morris is very ill." This Mr. Morris was the brother of Lord Tulla, and was the sitting member for Loughshane. "Upon my word I think I should try that. I don't see where we 're to put our hands on a seat in England. I don't indeed." Phineas, as he listened to this, could not help thinking that Barrington Erle, though he had certainly expressed a great deal of solicitude, was not as true a friend as he used to be. Perhaps he, Phineas, had risen too fast, and Barrington Erle was beginning to think that he might as well be out of the way.

He wrote to his father, asking after the borough, and asking after the health of Mr. Morris. And in his letter he told his own story very plainly,—almost

pathetically. He perhaps had been wrong to make the attempt which he had made. He began to believe that he had been wrong. But at any rate he had made it so far successfully, and failure now would be doubly bitter. He thought that the party to which he belonged must now remain in office. It would hardly be possible that a new election would produce a House of Commons favourable to a conservative ministry. And with a liberal ministry he, Phineas, would be sure of his place, and sure of an official income,—if only he could find a seat. It was all very true, and was almost pathetic. The old doctor, who was inclined to be proud of his son, was not unwilling to make a sacrifice. Mrs. Finn declared before her daughters that if there was a seat in all Ireland, Phineas ought to have it. And Mary Flood Jones stood by listening, and wondering what Phineas would do if he lost his seat. Would he come back and live in county Clare, and be like any other girl's lover? Poor Mary had come to lose her ambition, and to think that girls whose lovers stayed at home were the happiest. Nevertheless, she would have walked all the way to Lord Tulla's house and back again, might that have availed to get the seat for Phineas. Then there came an express over from Castlemorris. The doctor was wanted at once to see Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris was very bad with gout in his stomach. According to the messenger it was supposed that Mr. Morris was dying. Before Dr. Finn had had an opportunity of answering his son's letter, Mr. Morris, the late member for Loughshane, had been gathered to his fathers.

Dr. Finn understood enough of elections for Parliament, and of the nature of boroughs, to be aware that

a candidate's chance of success is very much improved by being early in the field; and he was aware, also, that the death of Mr. Morris would probably create various aspirants for the honour of representing Loughshane. But he could hardly address the Earl on the subject while the dead body of the late member was lying in the house at Castlemorris. The bill which had passed in the late session for reforming the constitution of the House of Commons had not touched Ireland, a future measure having been promised to the Irish for their comfort; and Loughshane therefore was, as to Lord Tulla's influence, the same as it had ever been. He had not then the plenary power which the other lord had held in his hands in regard to Loughton;—but still the Castlemorris interest would go a long way. It might be possible to stand against it, but it would be much more desirable that the candidate should have it at his back. Dr. Finn was fully alive to this as he sat opposite to the old lord, saying now a word about the old lord's gout in his legs and arms, and then about the gout in the stomach, which had carried away to another world the lamented late member for the borough.

"Poor Jack!" said Lord Tulla piteously. "If I 'd known it, I need n't have paid over two thousand pounds for him last year;—need I, doctor?"

"No, indeed," said Dr. Finn, feeling that his patient might perhaps approach the subject of the borough himself.

"He never would live by any rule, you know," said the desolate brother.

"Very hard to guide;—was he not, my lord?"

"The very devil. Now, you see, I do do what I 'm told pretty well,—don't I, doctor?"

"Sometimes."

"By George, I do nearly always. I don't know what you mean by sometimes. I 've been drinking brandy and water till I 'm sick of it, to oblige you, and you tell me about—sometimes. You doctors expect a man to be a slave. Have n't I kept it out of my stomach?"

"Thank God, yes."

"It 's all very well thanking God, but I should have gone as poor Jack has gone, if I had n't been the most careful man in the world. He was drinking champagne ten days ago; would do it, you know." Lord Tulla could talk about himself and his own ailments by the hour together, and Dr. Finn, who had thought that his noble patient was approaching the subject of the borough, was beginning again to feel that the double interest of the gout that was present, and the gout that had passed away, would be too absorbing. He, however, could say but little to direct the conversation.

"Mr. Morris, you see, lived more in London than you do, and was subject to temptation."

"I don't know what you call temptation. Have n't I the temptation of a bottle of wine under my nose every day of my life?"

"No doubt you have."

"And I don't drink it. I hardly ever take above a glass or two of brown sherry. By George! when I think of it, I wonder at my own courage. I do, indeed."

"But a man in London, my lord——"

"Why the deuce would he go to London? By-the-bye, what am I to do about the borough now?"

"Let my son stand for it, if you will, my lord."

"They 've clean swept away Brentford's seat at Loughton, have n't they? Ha, ha, ha! What a nice game for him,—to have been forced to help to do it himself! There 's nobody on earth I pity so much as a radical peer who is obliged to work like a nigger with a spade to shovel away the ground from under his own feet. As for me, I don't care who sits for Loughshane. I did care for poor Jack while he was alive. I don't think I shall interfere any longer. I am glad it lasted Jack's time." Lord Tulla had probably already forgotten that he himself had thrown Jack over for the last session but one.

"Phineas, my lord," began the father, "is now Under-Secretary of State."

"Oh, I 've no doubt he 's a very fine fellow;—but, you see, he 's an out-and-out radical."

"No, my lord."

"Then how can he serve with such men as Mr. Gresham and Mr. Monk? They 've turned out poor old Mildmay among them, because he 's not fast enough for them. Don't tell me."

"My anxiety, of course, is for my boy's prospects. He seems to have done so well in Parliament."

"Why don't he stand for Marylebone or Finsbury?"

"The money, you know, my lord!"

"I shan't interfere here, doctor. If he comes, and the people then choose to return him, I shall say nothing. They may do just as they please. They tell me Lambert St. George, of Mockrath, is going to stand. If he does, it 's the d—— piece of impudence I ever heard of. He 's a tenant of my own, though he has a lease forever; and his father never owned an acre of land in the county till his uncle died." Then the

doctor knew that, with a little management, the lord's interest might be secured for his son.

Phineas came over and stood for the borough against Mr. Lambert St. George, and the contest was sharp enough. The gentry of the neighbourhood could not understand why such a man as Lord Tulla should admit a liberal candidate to succeed his brother. No one canvassed for the young Under-Secretary with more persistent zeal than did his father, who, when Phineas first spoke of going into Parliament, had produced so many good arguments against that perilous step. Lord Tulla's agent stood aloof,—desolate with grief at the death of the late member. At such a moment of family affliction, Lord Tulla, he declared, could not think of such a matter as the borough. But it was known that Lord Tulla was dreadfully jealous of Mr. Lambert St. George, whose property in that part of the county was now nearly equal to his own and who saw much more company at Mockrath than was ever entertained at Castlemorris. A word from Lord Tulla,—so said the conservatives of the county, —would have put Mr. St. George into the seat; but that word was not spoken, and the conservatives of the neighbourhood swore that Lord Tulla was a renegade. The contest was very sharp, but our hero was returned by a majority of seventeen votes.

Again successful! As he thought of it he remembered stories of great generals who were said to have chained Fortune to the wheels of their chariots, but it seemed to him that the goddess had never served any general with such staunch obedience as she had displayed in his cause. Had not everything gone well with him;—so well, as almost to justify him in expect-

ing that even yet Violet Effingham would become his wife? Dear, dearest Violet! If he could only achieve that, no general who ever led an army across the Alps would be his equal either in success or in the reward of success. Then he questioned himself as to what he would say to Miss Flood Jones on that very night. He was to meet dear little Mary Flood Jones that evening at a neighbour's house. His sister Barbara had so told him in a tone of voice which he quite understood to imply a caution. "I shall be so glad to see her," Phineas had replied.

"If there ever was an angel on earth, it is Mary," said Barbara Finn.

"I know that she is as good as gold," said Phineas.

"Gold!" replied Barbara,—"gold indeed! She is more precious than refined gold. But, Phineas, perhaps you had better not single her out for any special attention. She has thought it wisest to meet you."

"Of course," said Phineas. "Why not?"

"That is all, Phineas. I have nothing more to say. Men of course are different from girls."

"That 's true, Barbara, at any rate."

"Don't laugh at me, Phineas, when I am thinking of nothing but of you and your interests, and when I am making all manner of excuses for you because I know what must be the distractions of the world in which you live." Barabara made more than one attempt to renew the conversation before the evening came, but Phineas thought that he had had enough of it. He did not like being told that excuses were made for him. After all, what had he done? He had once kissed Mary Flood Jones behind the door.

"I am so glad to see you, Mary," he said, coming

and taking a chair by her side. He had been specially warned not to single Mary out for his attention, and yet there was the chair left vacant as though it were expected that he would fall into it.

"Thank you. We did not happen to meet last year, did we,—Mr. Finn?"

"Do not call me Mr. Finn, Mary."

"You are such a great man now!"

"Not at all a great man. If you only knew what little men we understrappers are in London you would hardly speak to me."

"But you are something——of State now;—are you not?"

"Well;—yes. That 's the name they give me. It simply means that if any member wants to badger some one in the House about the Colonies, I am the man to be badgered. But if there is any credit to be had, I am not the man who is to have it."

"But it is a great thing to be in Parliament and in the Government too."

"It is a great thing for me, Mary, to have a salary, though it may only be for a year or two. However, I will not deny that it is pleasant to have been successful."

"It has been very pleasant to us, Phineas. Mamma has been so much rejoiced."

"I am so sorry not to see her. She is at Floodborough, I suppose."

"Oh yes;—she is at home. She does not like coming out at night in winter. I have been staying here, you know, for two days, but I go home to-morrow."

"I will ride over and call on your mother." Then there was a pause in the conversation for a moment.

"Does it not seem odd, Mary, that we should see so little of each other?"

"You are so much away, of course."

"Yes;—that is the reason. But still it seems almost unnatural. I often wonder when the time will come that I shall be quietly at home again. I have to be back in my office in London this day week, and yet I have not had a single hour to myself since I have been at Killaloe. But I will certainly ride over and see your mother. You will be at home on Wednesday, I suppose?"

"Yes,—I shall be at home."

Upon that he got up and went away, but again in the evening he found himself near her. Perhaps there is no position more perilous to a man's honesty than that in which Phineas now found himself;—that, namely, of knowing himself to be quite loved by a girl whom he almost loves himself. Of course he loved Violet Effingham; and they who talk best of love protest that no man or woman can be in love with two persons at once. Phineas was not in love with Mary Flood Jones; but he would have liked to take her in his arms and kiss her;—he would have liked to gratify her by swearing that she was dearer to him than all the world; he would have liked to have an episode,—and did, at the moment, think that it might be possible to have one life in London and another life altogether different at Killaloe. "Dear Mary," he said as he pressed her hand that night, "things will get themselves settled at last, I suppose." He was behaving very ill to her, but he did not mean to behave ill.

He rode over to Floodborough, and saw Mrs. Flood Jones. Mrs. Flood Jones, however, received him very

coldly; and Mary did not appear. Mary had communicated to her mother her resolutions as to her future life. "The fact is, mamma, I love him. I cannot help it. If he ever chooses to come for me, here I am. If he does not, I will bear it as well as I can. It may be very mean of me, but it 's true."

CHAPTER XXVI.

TROUBLES AT LOUGHLINTER.

THERE was a dull house at Loughlinter during the greater part of this autumn. A few men went down for the grouse shooting late in the season; but they stayed but a short time, and when they went Lady Laura was left alone with her husband. Mr. Kennedy had explained to his wife, more than once, that though he understood the duties of hospitality and enjoyed the performance of them, he had not married with the intention of living in a whirlwind. He was disposed to think that the whirlwind had hitherto been too predominant, and had said so very plainly with a good deal of marital authority. This autumn and winter were to be devoted to the cultivation of proper relations between him and his wife. "Does that mean Darby and Joan?" his wife had asked him, when the proposition was made to her. "It means mutual regard and esteem," replied Mr. Kennedy in his most solemn tone, "and I trust that such mutual regard and esteem between us may yet be possible." When Lady Laura showed him a letter from her brother, received some weeks after this conversation, in which Lord Chiltern expressed his intention of coming to Loughlinter for Christmas, he returned the note to his wife without a word. He suspected that she had made the arrangement without asking him, and was angry; but he would not tell her that her brother would not be wel-

come at his house. "It is not my doing," she said, when she saw the frown on his brow.

"I said nothing about anybody's doing," he replied.

"I will write to Oswald and bid him not come, if you wish it. Of course you can understand why he is coming."

"Not to see me, I am sure," said Mr. Kennedy.

"Nor me," replied Lady Laura. "He is coming because my friend Violet Effingham will be here."

"Miss Effingham! Why was I not told of this? I knew nothing of Miss Effingham's coming."

"Robert, it was settled in your own presence last July."

"I deny it."

Then Lady Laura rose up, very haughty in her gait and with something of fire in her eye, and silently left the room. Mr. Kennedy, when he found himself alone, was very unhappy. Looking back in his mind to the summer weeks in London, he remembered that his wife had told Violet that she was to spend her Christmas at Loughlinter, that he himself had given a muttered assent, and that Violet,—as far as he could remember, —had made no reply. It had been one of those things which are so often mentioned, but not settled. He felt that he had been strictly right in denying that it had been "settled" in his presence;—but yet he felt that he had been wrong in contradicting his wife so peremptorily. He was a just man, and he would apologise for his fault; but he was an austere man, and would take back the value of his apology in additional austerity. He did not see his wife for some hours after the conversation which has been narrated, but when he did meet her his mind was still full of the subject.

"Laura," he said, "I am sorry that I contradicted you."

"I am quite used to it, Robert."

"No;—you are not used to it." She smiled and bowed her head. "You wrong me by saying that you are used to it." Then he paused a moment, but she said not a word,—only smiled and bowed her head again. "I remember," he continued, "that something was said in my presence to Miss Effingham about her coming here at Christmas. It was so slight, however, that it had passed out of my memory till recalled by an effort. I beg your pardon."

"That is unnecessary, Robert."

"It is, dear."

"And do you wish that I should put her off,—or put Oswald off,—or both? My brother never yet has seen me in your house."

"And whose fault has that been?"

"I have said nothing about anybody's fault, Robert. I merely mentioned a fact. Will you let me know whether I shall bid him stay away?"

"He is welcome to come,—only I do not like assignations for love-making."

"Assignations!"

"Clandestine meetings. Lady Baldock would not wish it."

"Lady Baldock! Do you think that Violet would exercise any secrecy in the matter,—or that she will not tell Lady Baldock that Oswald will be here,—as soon as she knows it herself?"

"That has nothing to do with it."

"Surely, Robert, it must have much to do with it. And why should not these two young people meet?

The acknowledged wish of all the family is that they should marry each other. And in this matter, at any rate, my brother has behaved extremely well." Mr. Kennedy said nothing further at the time, and it became an understanding that Violet Effingham was to be a month at Loughlinter, staying from the 20th of December to the 20th of January, and that Lord Chiltern was to come there for Christmas,—which with him would probably mean three days.

Before Christmas came, however, there were various other sources of uneasiness at Loughlinter. There had been, as a matter of course, great anxiety as to the elections. With Lady Laura this anxiety had been very strong, and even Mr. Kennedy had been warmed with some amount of fire as the announcements reached him of the successes and of the failures. The English returns came first,—and then the Scotch, which were quite as interesting to Mr. Kennedy as the English. His own seat was quite safe,—was not contested; but some neighbouring seats were sources of great solicitude. Then, when this was over, there were the tidings from Ireland to be received; and respecting one special borough in Ireland Lady Laura evinced more solicitude than her husband approved. There was much danger for the domestic bliss of the house of Loughlinter, when things came to such a pass, and such words were spoken as the election at Loughshane produced.

"He is in," said Lady Laura, opening a telegram.

"Who is in?" said Mr. Kennedy, with that frown on his brow to which his wife was now well accustomed. Though he asked the question, he knew very well who was the hero to whom the telegram referred.

"Our friend Phineas Finn," said Lady Laura, speak-

ing still with an excited voice,—with a voice that was intended to display excitement. If there was to be a battle on this matter, there should be a battle. She would display all her anxiety for her young friend, and fling it in her husband's face if he chose to take it as an injury. What,—should she endure reproach from her husband because she regarded the interests of the man who had saved his life, of the man respecting whom she had suffered so many heart-struggles, and as to whom she had at last come to the conclusion that he should ever be regarded as a second brother, loved equally with the elder brother? She had done her duty by her husband,—so at least she had assured herself; —and should he dare to reproach her on this subject, she would be ready for the battle. And now the battle came. "I am glad of this," she said, with all the eagerness she could throw into her voice. "I am, indeed,—and so ought you to be." The husband's brow grew blacker and blacker, but still he said nothing. He had long been too proud to be jealous, and was now too proud to express his jealousy,—if only he could keep the expression back. But his wife would not leave the subject. "I am so thankful for this," she said, pressing the telegram between her hands. "I was so afraid he would fail!"

"You over-do your anxiety on such a subject," at last he said, speaking very slowly.

"What do you mean, Robert? How can I be over-anxious? If it concerned any other dear friend that I have in the world, it would not be an affair of life and death. To him it is almost so. I would have walked from here to London to get him his election." And as she spoke she held up the clenched fist of her left hand,

and shook it, while she still held the telegram in her right hand.

"Laura, I must tell you that it is improper that you should speak of any man in those terms;—of any man that is a stranger to your blood."

"A stranger to my blood! What has that to do with it? This man is my friend, is your friend;—saved your life, has been my brother's best friend, is loved by my father,—and is loved by me, very dearly. Tell me what you mean by improper!"

"I will not have you love any man,—very dearly."

"Robert!"

"I tell you that I will have no such expressions from you. They are unseemly, and are used only to provoke me."

"Am I to understand that I am insulted by an accusation? If so, let me beg at once that I may be allowed to go to Saulsby. I would rather accept your apology and retractation there than here."

"You will not go to Saulsby, and there has been no accusation, and there will be no apology. If you please there will be no more mention of Mr. Finn's name between us, for the present. If you will take my advice, you will cease to think of him extravagantly;—and I must desire you to hold no further direct communication with him."

"I have held no communication with him," said Lady Laura, advancing a step towards him. But Mr. Kennedy simply pointed to the telegram in her hand, and left the room. Now in respect to this telegram there had been an unfortunate mistake. I am not prepared to say that there was any reason why Phineas himself should not have sent the news of his success to

Lady Laura; but he had not done so. The piece of paper which she still held crushed in her hand was in itself very innocent. "Hurrah for the Loughshanes. Finny has done the trick." Such were the words written on the slip, and they had been sent to Lady Laura by her young cousin, the clerk in the office who acted as private secretary to the Under-Secretary of State. Lady Laura resolved that her husband should never see those innocent but rather undignified words. The occasion had become one of importance, and such words were unworthy of it. Besides, she would not condescend to defend herself by bringing forward a telegram as evidence in her favour. So she burned the morsel of paper.

Lady Laura and Mr. Kennedy did not meet again till late that evening. She was ill, she said, and would not come down to dinner. After dinner she wrote him a note. "Dear Robert, I think you must regret what you said to me. If so, pray let me have a line from you to that effect. Yours affectionately, L." When the servant handed it to him, and he had read it, he smiled and thanked the girl who had brought it, and said he would see her mistress just now. Anything would be better than that the servants should know that there was a quarrel. But every servant in the house had known all about it for the last three hours. When the door was closed and he was alone, he sat fingering the note, thinking deeply how he should answer it, or whether he would answer it at all. No; he would not answer it;—not in writing. He would give his wife no written record of his humiliation. He had not acted wrongly. He had said nothing more than now, upon mature consideration, he thought that the

circumstances demanded. But yet he felt that he must in some sort withdraw the accusation which he had made. If he did not withdraw it, there was no knowing what his wife might do. About ten in the evening he went up to her and made his little speech. "My dear, I have come to answer your note."

"I thought you would have written to me a line."

"I have come instead, Laura. Now, if you will listen to me for one moment, I think everything will be made smooth."

"Of course I will listen," said Lady Laura, knowing very well that her husband's moment would be rather tedious, and resolving that she also would have her moment afterwards.

"I think you will acknowledge that if there be a difference of opinion between you and me as to any question of social intercourse, it will be better that you should consent to adopt my opinion."

"You have the law on your side."

"I am not speaking of the law."

"Well;—go on, Robert. I will not interrupt you if I can help it."

"I am not speaking of the law. I am speaking simply of convenience, and of that which you must feel to be right. If I wish that your intercourse with any person should be of such or such a nature it must be best that you should comply with my wishes." He paused for her assent, but she neither assented nor dissented. "As far as I can understand the position of a man and wife in this country, there is no other way in which life can be made harmonious."

"Life will not run in harmonies."

"I expect that ours shall be made to do so, Laura.

I need hardly say to you that I intend to accuse you of no impropriety of feeling in reference to this young man."

"No, Robert; you need hardly say that. Indeed, to speak my own mind, I think that you need hardly have alluded to it. I might go further, and say that such an allusion is in itself an insult,—an insult now repeated after hours of deliberation,—an insult which I will not endure to have repeated again. If you say another word in any way suggesting the possibility of improper relations between me and Mr. Finn, either as to deeds or thoughts, as God is above me, I will write to both my father and my brother, and desire them to take me from your house. If you wish me to remain here, you had better be careful!" As she was making this speech, her temper seemed to rise, and to become hot, and then hotter, till it glowed with a red heat. She had been cool till the word insult, used by herself, had conveyed back to her a strong impression of her own wrong,—or perhaps I should rather say a strong feeling of the necessity of becoming indignant. She was standing as she spoke, and the fire flashed from her eyes, and he quailed before her. The threat which she had held out to him was very dreadful to him. He was a man terribly in fear of the world's good opinion, who lacked the courage to go through a great and harassing trial in order that something better might come afterwards. His married life had been unhappy. His wife had not submitted either to his will or to his ways. He had that great desire to enjoy his full rights, so strong in the minds of weak, ambitious men, and he had told himself that a wife's obedience was one of those rights which he could not abandon without injury to his self-

esteem. He had thought about the matter, slowly, as was his wont, and had resolved that he would assert himself. He had asserted himself, and his wife told him to his face that she would go away and leave him. He could detain her legally, but he could not do even that without the fact of such forcible detention being known to all the world. How was he to answer her now at this moment, so that she might not write to her father, and so that his self-assertion might still be maintained?

"Passion, Laura, can never be right."

"Would you have a woman submit to insult without passion? I at any rate am not such a woman." Then there was a pause for a moment. "If you have nothing else to say to me, you had better leave me. I am far from well, and my head is throbbing."

He came up and took her hand, but she snatched it away from him. "Laura," he said, "do not let us quarrel."

"I certainly shall quarrel if such insinuations are repeated."

"I made no insinuation."

"Do not repeat them. That is all."

He was cowed and left her, having first attempted to get out of the difficulty of his position by making much of her alleged illness, and by offering to send for Dr. Macnuthrie. She positively refused to see Dr. Macnuthrie, and at last succeeded in inducing him to quit the room.

This had occurred about the end of November, and on the 20th of December Violet Effingham reached Loughlinter. Life in Mr. Kennedy's house had gone quietly during the intervening three weeks, but not very

pleasantly. The name of Phineas Finn had not been mentioned. Lady Laura had triumphed; but she had no desire to acerbate her husband by any unpalatable allusion to her victory. And he was quite willing to let the subject die away, if only it would die. On some other matters he continued to assert himself, taking his wife to church twice every Sunday, using longer family prayers than she approved, reading an additional sermon himself every Sunday evening, calling upon her for weekly attention to elaborate household accounts, asking for her personal assistance in much local visiting, initiating her into his favourite methods of family life in the country, till sometimes she almost longed to talk again about Phineas Finn, so that there might be a rupture, and she might escape. But her husband asserted himself within bounds, and she submitted, longing for the coming of Violet Effingham. She could not write to her father and beg to be taken away, because her husband would read a sermon to her on Sunday evening.

To Violet, very shortly after her arrival, she told her whole story. "This is terrible," said Violet. "This makes me feel that I never will be married."

"And yet what can a woman become if she remains single? The curse is to be a woman at all."

"I have always felt so proud of the privileges of my sex," said Violet.

"I never have found them," said the other; "never. I have tried to make the best of its weaknesses, and this is what I have come to! I suppose I ought to have loved some man."

"And did you never love any man?"

"No;—I think I never did,—not as people mean when they speak of love. I have felt that I would

consent to be cut in little pieces for my brother,—because of my regard for him."

"Ah, that is nothing."

"And I have felt something of the same thing for another,—a longing for his welfare, a delight to hear him praised, a charm in his presence,—so strong a feeling for his interest, that were he to go to wrack and ruin, I too should, after a fashion, be wracked and ruined. But it has not been love either."

"Do I know whom you mean? May I name him? It is Phineas Finn."

"Of course it is Phineas Finn."

"Did he ever ask you to love him?"

"I feared he would do so, and therefore accepted Mr. Kennedy's offer almost at the first word."

"I do not quite understand your reasoning, Laura."

"I understand it. I could have refused him nothing in my power to give him, but I did not wish to be his wife."

"And he never asked you?"

Lady Laura paused a moment, thinking what reply she should make;—and then she told a fib. "No; he never asked me." But Violet did not believe the fib. Violet was quite sure that Phineas had asked Lady Laura Standish to be his wife. "As far as I can see," said Violet, "Madame Max Goesler is his present passion."

"I do not believe it in the least," said Lady Laura, firing up.

"It does not much matter," said Violet.

"It would matter very much. You know, you,—you; you know whom he loves. And I do believe that sooner or later you will be his wife."

"Never."

"Yes, you will. Had you not loved him you would never have condescended to accuse him about that woman."

"I have not accused him. Why should he not marry Madame Max Goesler? It would be just the thing for him. She is very rich."

"Never. You will be his wife."

"Laura, you are the most capricious of women. You have two dear friends, and you insist that I shall marry them both. Which shall I take first?"

"Oswald will be here in a day or two, and you can take him if you like it. No doubt he will ask you. But I do not think you will."

"No; I do not think I shall. I shall knock under to Mr. Mill, and go in for women's rights, and look forward to stand for some female borough. Matrimony never seemed to me to be very charming, and upon my word it does not become more alluring by what I find at Loughlinter."

It was thus that Violet and Lady Laura discussed these matters together, but Violet had never showed to her friend the cards in her hand, as Lady Laura had shown those which she held. Lady Laura had in fact told almost everything that there was to tell,—had spoken either plainly with true words, or equally plainly with words that were not true. Violet Effingham had almost come to love Phineas Finn;—but she never told her friend that it was so. At one time she had almost made up her mind to give herself and all her wealth to this adventurer. He was a better man, she thought, than Lord Chiltern; and she had come to persuade herself that it was almost imperative on her to take

the one or the other. Though she could talk about remaining unmarried, she knew that that was practically impossible. All those around her,—those of the Baldock as well as those of the Brentford faction,—would make such a life impossible to her. Besides, in such a case what could she do? It was all very well to talk of disregarding the world and of setting up a house for herself;—but she was quite aware that that project could not be used further than for the purpose of scaring her amiable aunt. And if not that,—then could she content herself to look forward to a joint life with Lady Baldock and Augusta Boreham? She might, of course, oblige her aunt by taking Lord Fawn, or oblige her aunt equally by taking Mr. Appledom; but she was strongly of opinion that either Lord Chiltern or Phineas would be preferable to these. Thinking over it always she had come to feel that it must be either Lord Chiltern or Phineas; but she had never whispered her thought to man or woman. On her journey to Loughlinter, where she then knew that she was to meet Lord Chiltern, she endeavoured to persuade herself that it should be Phineas. But Lady Laura had marred it all by that ill-told fib. There had been a moment before in which Violet had felt that Phineas had sacrificed something of that truth of love for which she gave him credit to the glances of Madame Goesler's eyes; but she had rebuked herself for the idea, accusing herself not only of a little jealousy, but of foolish vanity. Was he, whom she had rejected, not to speak to another woman? Then came the blow from Lady Laura, and Violet knew that it was a blow. This gallant lover, this young Crichton, this unassuming but ardent lover, had simply taken up with her as soon as he had failed

with her friend. Lady Laura had been most enthusiastic in her expressions of friendship. Such platonic regards might be all very well. It was for Mr. Kennedy to look to that. But, for herself, she felt that such expressions were hardly compatible with her ideas of having her lover all to herself. And then she again remembered Madame Goesler's bright blue eyes.

Lord Chiltern came on Christmas-eve, and was received with open arms by his sister, and with that painful, irritating affection which such a girl as Violet can show to such a man as Lord Chiltern, when she will not give him that other affection for which his heart is panting. The two men were civil to each other,—but very cold. They called each other Kennedy and Chiltern, but even that was not done without an effort. On the Christmas morning Mr. Kennedy asked his brother-in-law to go to church. "It 's a kind of thing I never do," said Lord Chiltern. Mr. Kennedy gave a little start, and looked a look of horror. Lady Laura showed that she was unhappy. Violet Effingham turned away her face, and smiled.

As they walked across the park Violet took Lord Chiltern's part. "He only means that he does not go to church on Christmas-day."

"I don't know what he means," said Mr. Kennedy.

"We need not speak of it," said Lady Laura.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Kennedy.

"I have been to church with him on Sundays myself," said Violet, perhaps not reflecting that the practices of early years had little to do with the young man's life at present.

Christmas-day and the next day passed without any sign from Lord Chiltern, and on the day after that he

was to go away. But he was not to leave till one or two in the afternoon. Not a word had been said between the two women, since he had been in the house, on the subject of which both of them were thinking. Very much had been said of the expediency of his going to Saulsby, but on this matter he had declined to make any promise. Sitting in Lady Laura's room, in the presence of both of them, he had refused to do so. "I am bad to drive," he said, turning to Violet, "and you had better not try to drive me."

"Why should not you be driven as well as another?" she answered, laughing.

END OF VOL. II.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

REC'D LD-URL
OCT 6 1980
JUL 1 1980

MAY 06 1985
LD-URL

MAY 07 1990
FEB 16 1990

MAY 06 1991

PSD 2343 9/77

3 1158 00397 4267